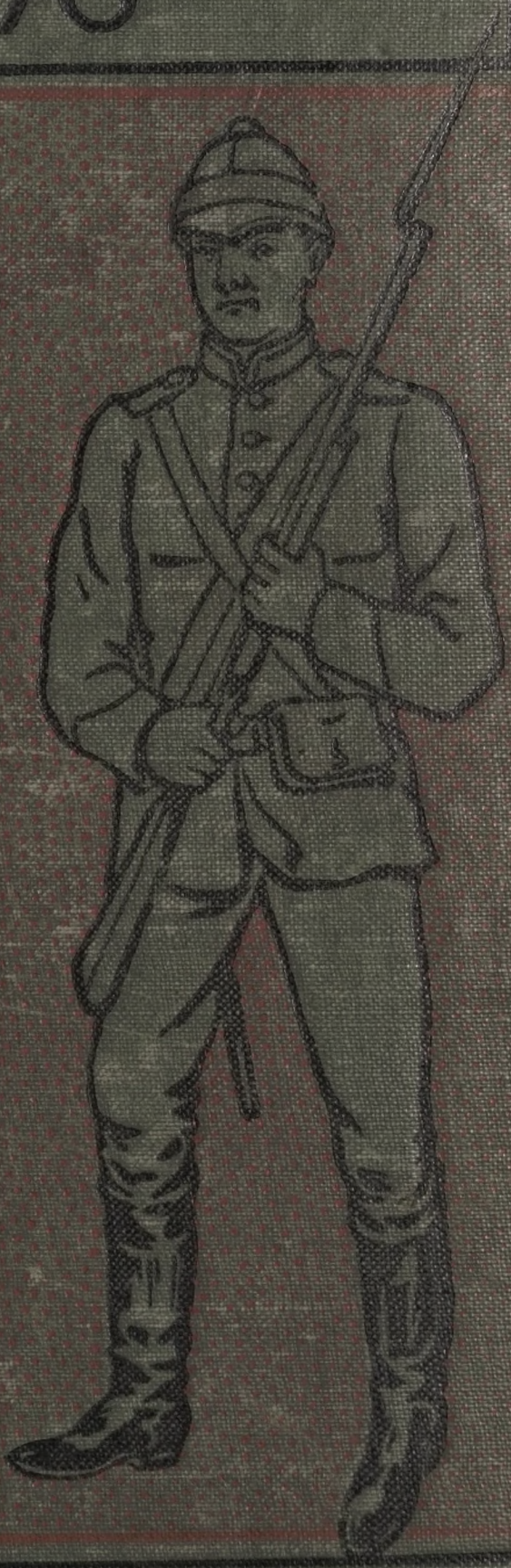
CAPTAIN BAYLEY'S HEIR

ILLUSTRATED



BY G. A. HENTY

RULES AN .ATIONS OF THE
MANL S DING ROOM

Rules and Regulations of the Manlius Reading Room

The privileges of the Reading Room are free to all residents of Manlius and surrounding country, if over eight years of age.

Any one wishing to draw books must apply in person and give their signature. After that books may be drawn by a member of the family or a friend if so desired.

The Reading Room will be open for the loaning of books and general reading room purposes on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons from three to five o'clock and Saturday evenings from seven to nine thirty. Holidays excepted

Two books may be drawn on one card but only one of fiction.

Books may be retained two weeks, they must then be returned to the library or may be stamped by the librarian if not wanted and taken for a further two weeks if so desired.

Any book kept more than two weeks will have a fine of two cents a day charged against its borrower.

Any book one week overdue may be sent for by the librarian and the fine collected.

Books may be used by the family or household only and not loaned to others.

Any book lost or damaged must be paid for by the borrower.

The borrower is responsible for books until they have been accepted and credited by the librarian.

In case of a contagious or malignant disease in a household, no books may be taken or returned therefrom.

The presence of children under eight years of age is not desired in the Reading Room during library hours as they annoy readers and interefere with the correct work of the librarians.

No loud talking or discussion will be permitted in the Reading Room.

CANCELLED
CANCELLED
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS 1800
Class PZ7
Book .H4
Cop
PRESENTED BY

F11
6.4

Harlan Curtis

Due 25-1901

CAPTAIN BAYLEY'S HEIR.

A TALE OF THE GOLD FIELDS OF CALIFORNIA.

By G. A. HENTY,

Author of "Bonnie Prince Charlie," "With Clive in India," "The Dragon and the Raven," "The Young Carthaginian," "The Lion of the North," "With Lee in Virginia," "By Pike and Dike," "Under Drake's Flag," "By England's Aid," "In Freedom's Cause," "In the Reign of Terror," etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. PAGET.

NEW YORK:
A. L. BURT, PUBLISHER.

=189-3

PZ7
.H4
Cap

Gift
Mr. J. C. Roberts
March 25 1938

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE.

Westminster! Westminster! 1

CHAPTER II.

A Cold Swim 15

CHAPTER III.

A Cripple Boy 30

CHAPTER IV.

An Adopted Child 44

CHAPTER V.

A Terrible Accusation 59

CHAPTER VI.

At New Orleans 74

CHAPTER VII.

On the Mississippi 87

CHAPTER VIII.

Starting for the West 105

CHAPTER IX.

On the Plains 129

CHAPTER X.

A Buffalo Story 146

CHAPTER XI.

PAGE.

How Dick Lost His Scalp 158

CHAPTER XII.

The Attack on the Caravan 176

CHAPTER XIII.

At the Gold-fields 191

CHAPTER XIV.

Captain Bayley 204

CHAPTER XV.

The Missing Heir 218

CHAPTER XVI.

John Holl, Dust Contractor 231

CHAPTER XVII.

The Lonely Diggers 246

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Dream Verified 265

CHAPTER XIX.

Striking it Rich 281

CHAPTER XX.

A Message from Abroad 296

CHAPTER XXI.

Happy Meetings 313

CHAPTER XXII.

Cleared at Last 326

CAPTAIN BAYLEY'S HEIR.

CHAPTER I.

WESTMINSTER! WESTMINSTER!

A CRIPPLE boy was sitting in a box on four low wheels, in a little room in a small street in Westminster; his age was some fifteen or sixteen years; his face was clear-cut and intelligent, and was altogether free from the expression either of discontent or of shrinking sadness so often seen in the face of those afflicted. Had he been sitting on a chair at a table, indeed, he would have been remarked as a handsome and well-grown young fellow; his shoulders were broad, his arms powerful, and his head erect. He had not been born a cripple, but had been disabled for life, when a tiny child, by a cart passing over his legs above the knees. He was talking to a lad a year or so younger than himself while a strong, hearty-looking woman, somewhat past middle age, stood at a washtub.

"What is all that noise about?" the cripple exclaimed, as an uproar was heard in the street at some little distance from the house.

"Drink, as usual, I suppose," the woman said.

The younger lad ran to the door.

"No, mother; it's them scholars a-coming back from cricket. Ain't there a fight jist!"

The cripple wheeled his box to the door, and then taking a pair of crutches which rested in hooks at its side when not wanted, swung himself from the box, and

propped himself in the doorway so as to command a view down the street.

It was indeed a serious fight. A party of Westminster boys, on their way back from their cricket-ground in St. Vincent's Square, had been attacked by the "skies." The quarrel was an old standing one, but had broken out afresh from a thrashing which one of the older lads had administered on the previous day to a young chimney-sweep about his own age, who had taken possession of the cricket-ball when it had been knocked into the roadway, and had, with much strong language, refused to throw it back when requested.

The friends of the sweep determined to retaliate upon the following day, and gathered so threateningly round the gate that, instead of the boys coming home in twos and threes, as was their wont, when playtime expired, they returned in a body. They were some forty in number, and varied in age from the little fags of the under school, ten or twelve years old, to brawny muscular young fellows of seventeen or eighteen, senior queen's scholars, or sixth form town boys. The queen's scholars were in their caps and gowns, the town boys were in ordinary attire, a few only having flannel cricketing trousers.

On first leaving the field they were assailed only by volleys of abuse; but as they made their way down the street their assailants grew bolder, and from words proceeded to blows, and soon a desperate fight was raging. In point of numbers the "skies" were vastly superior, and many of them were grown men; but the knowledge of boxing which almost every Westminster boy in those days possessed, and the activity and quickness of hitting of the boys, went far to equalize the odds.

Pride in their school, too, would have rendered it impossible for any to show the white feather on such an occasion as this, and with the younger boys as far as possible in

their center, the seniors faced their opponents manfully. Even the lads of but thirteen and fourteen years old were not idle. Taking from the fags the bats which several of the latter were carrying, they joined in the conflict, not striking at their opponents' heads, but occasionally aiding their seniors, when attacked by three or four at once, by swinging blows on their assailants' shins.

Man after man among the crowd had gone down before the blows straight from the shoulder of the boys, and many had retired from the contest with faces which would for many days bear marks of the fight; but their places were speedily filled up, and the numbers of the assailants grew stronger every minute.

"How well they fight!" the cripple exclaimed. "Splendid! isn't it, mother? But there are too many against them. Run, Evan, quick, down to Dean's Yard; you are sure to find some of them playing at racquets in the Little Yard, tell them that the boys coming home from cricket have been attacked, and that unless help comes they will be terribly knocked about."

Evan dashed off at full speed. Dean's Yard was but a few minutes' run distant. He dashed through the little archway into the yard, down the side, and then in at another archway into Little Dean's Yard, where some elder boys were playing at racquets. A fag was picking up the balls, and two or three others were standing at the top of the steps of the two boarding-houses.

"If you please, sir," Evan said, running up to one of the racquet-players, "there is just a row going on; they are all pitching into the scholars on their way back from Vincent Square, and if you don't send help they will get it nicely, though they are all fighting like bricks."

"Here, all of you," the lad he addressed shouted to the others; "our fellows are attacked by the 'skies' on their way back from the fields. Run up college, James; the

fellows from the water have come back." Then he turned to the boys on the steps, "Bring all the fellows out quick; the 'skies' are attacking us on the way back from the fields. Don't let them wait a moment."

It was lucky that the boys who had been on the water in the two eights, the six, and the fours, had returned, or at that hour there would have been few in the boarding-houses or up college. Ere a minute had elapsed these, with a few others who had been kept off field and water from indisposition, or other causes, came pouring out at the summons—a body some thirty strong, of whom fully half were big boys. They dashed out of the gate in a body, and made their way to the scene of the conflict. They were but just in time; the compact group of the boys had been broken up, and every one now was fighting for himself.

They had made but little progress toward the school since Evan had started, and the fight was now raging opposite his house. The cripple was almost crying with excitement and at his own inability to join in the fight going on. His sympathies were wholly with "the boys," toward whose side he was attached by the disparity of their numbers compared to those of their opponents, and by the coolness and resolution with which they fought.

"Just look at those two, mother—those two fighting back to back. Isn't it grand! There! there is another one down; that is the fifth I have counted. Don't they fight cool and steady? and they almost look smiling, though the odds against them are ten to one. Oh mother, if I could but go to help them!"

Mrs. Holl herself was not without sharing his excitement. Several times she made sorties from her doorstep, and seized more than one hulking fellow in the act of pummeling a youngster half his size, and shook him with a vigor which showed that constant exercise at the wash-tub had strengthened her arms.

"Yer ought to be ashamed of yerselves, yer ought; a whole crowd of yer pitching into a handful o' boys."

But her remonstrances were unheeded in the din, which, however, was raised entirely by the assailants, the boys fighting silently, save when an occasional shout of "Hurrah, Westminster!" was raised. Presently Evan dashed through the crowd up to the door.

"Are they coming, Evan?" the cripple asked eagerly.

"Yes, 'Arry; they will be 'ere in a jiffy."

A half-minute later, and with shouts of "Westminster! Westminster!" the reinforcement came tearing up the street.

Their arrival in an instant changed the face of things. The "skies" for a moment or two resisted; but the muscles of the eight—hardened by the training which had lately given them victory over Eton in their annual race—stood them in good stead, and the hard hitting of the "water" soon beat back the lately triumphant assailants of "cricket." The united band took the offensive, and in two or three minutes the "skies" were in full flight.

"We were just in time, Norris," one of the newcomers said to the tall lad in cricketing flannels whose straight hitting had particularly attracted the admiration of Harry Holl.

"Only just," the other said, smiling; "it was a hot thing, and a pretty sight we shall look up school to-morrow. I shall have two thundering black eyes, and my mouth won't look pretty for a fortnight; and, by the look of them, most of the others have fared worse. It's the biggest fight we have had for years. But I don't think the 'skies' will interfere with us again for some time, for every mark we've got they've got ten. Won't there be a row in school to-morrow when Litter sees that half the sixth can't see out of their eyes."

Not for many years had the lessons at Westminster been

so badly prepared as they were upon the following morning —indeed, with the exception of the half and home-boarders, few of whom had shared in the fight, not a single boy, from the under school to the sixth, had done an exercise or prepared a lesson. Study indeed had been out of the question, for all were too excited and too busy talking over the details of the battle to be able to give the slightest attention to their work.

Many were the tales of feats of individual prowess; but all who had taken part agreed that none had so distinguished themselves as Frank Norris, a sixth form town boy, and captain of the eight—who, for a wonder had for once been up at fields—and Fred Barkley, a senior in the sixth. But, grievous and general as was the breakdown in lessons next day, no impositions were set; the boarding-house masters, Richards and Sargent, had of course heard all about it at tea-time, as had Johns, who did not himself keep a boarding-house, but resided at Carr's, the boarding-house down by the great gate.

These, therefore, were prepared for the state of things, and contented themselves by ordering the forms under their charge to set to work with their dictionaries and write out the lessons they should have prepared. The sixth did not get off so easily. Dr. Litter, in his lofty solitude as head-master, had heard nothing of what had passed; nor was it until the sixth took their places in the library and began to construe that his attention was called to the fact that something unusual had happened. But the sudden hesitation and blundering of the first "put on," and the inability of those next to him to correct him, were too marked to be passed over, and he raised his gold-rimmed eye-glasses to his eyes and looked round.

Dr. Litter was a man standing some six feet two in height, stately in manner, somewhat sarcastic in speech, a very prodigy in classical learning, and joint author of the

great treatise "On The Uses of the Greek Particle." Searchingly he looked from face to face round the library.

"I cannot," he said, with a curl of his upper lip, and the cold and somewhat nasal tone which set every nerve in a boy's body twitching when he heard it raised in reproof, "I really cannot congratulate you on your appearance. I thought that the sixth form of Westminster was composed of gentlemen, but it seems to me now as if it consisted of a number of singularly disreputable-looking prize-fighters. What does all this mean, Williams?" he asked, addressing the captain; "your face appears to have met with better usage than some of the others."

"It means, sir," Williams said, "that as the party from fields were coming back yesterday evening, they were attacked by the 'skies'—I mean by the roughs—and got terribly knocked about. When the news came to us I was up college, and the fellows had just come back from the water, so of course we all sallied out to rescue them."

"Did it not occur to you, Williams, that there is a body called the police, whose duty it is to interfere in disgraceful uproars of this sort?"

"If we had waited for the police, sir," Williams said, "half the school would not have been fit to take their places in form again before the end of the term."

"It does not appear to me," Dr. Litter said, "that a great many of them are fit to take their places at present. I can scarcely see Norris' eyes; and I suppose that boy is Barkley, as he sits in the place that he usually occupies, otherwise, I should not have recognized him; and Smart, Robertson, and Barker and Barret are nearly as bad. I suppose you feel satisfied with yourselves, boys, and consider that this sort of thing is creditable to you; to my mind it is simply disgraceful. There! I don't want to hear any more at present; I suppose the whole school is in the same state. Those of you who can see had better go

back to school and prepare your Demosthenes; those who cannot had best go back to their boarding-houses, or up college, and let the doctor be sent for to see if anything can be done for you."

The doctor had indeed already been sent for, for some seven or eight of the younger boys had been so seriously knocked about and kicked that they were unable to leave their beds. For the rest a doctor could do nothing. Fights were not uncommon at Westminster in those days, but the number of orders for beefsteaks which the nearest butcher had received on the previous evening had fairly astonished him. Indeed, had it not been for the prompt application of these to their faces, very few of the party from the fields would have been able to find their way up school unless they had been led by their comrades.

At Westminster there was an hour's school before breakfast, and when nine o'clock struck, and the boys poured out, Dr. Litter and his under-masters held council together.

"This is a disgraceful business!" Dr. Litter said, looking, as was his wont, at some distant object far over the heads of the others.

There was a general murmur of assent.

"The boys do not seem to have been much to blame," Mr. Richards suggested in the cheerful tone habitual to him. "From what I can hear it seems to have been a planned thing; the people gathered round the gates before they left the fields and attacked them without any provocation."

"There must have been some provocation somewhere, Mr. Richards, if not yesterday, then the day before, or the day before that," Dr. Litter said, twirling his eyeglass by the ribbon. "A whole host of people do not gather to assault forty or fifty boys without provocation. This sort of thing must not occur again. I do not see that I can punish one boy without punishing the whole school; but,

at any rate, for the next week fields must be stopped. I shall write to the commissioner of police, asking that when they again go to Vincent Square some policemen may be put on duty, not of course to accompany them, but to interfere at once if they see any signs of a repetition of this business. I shall request that, should there be any fighting, those not belonging to the school who commit an assault may be taken before a magistrate; my own boys I can punish myself. Are any of the boys seriously injured, do you think?"

"I hope not, sir," Mr. Richards said; "there are three or four in my house, and there are ten at Mr. Sargent's, and two at Carr's, who have gone on the sick list. I sent for the doctor, and he may have seen them by this time; they all seem to have been knocked down and kicked."

"There are four of the juniors at college in the infirmary," Mr. Wire, who was in special charge of the queen's scholars, put in. "I had not heard about it last night, and was in ignorance of what had taken place until the list of those who had gone into the infirmary was put into my hands, and then I heard from Williams what had taken place."

"It is very unpleasant," Dr. Litter said, in a weary tone of voice—as if boys were a problem far more difficult to be mastered than any that the Greek authors afforded him—"that one cannot trust boys to keep out of mischief for an hour. Of course with small boys this sort of thing is to be expected; but that young fellows like Williams and the other seniors, and the sixth town boys, who are on the eve of going up to the universities, should so far forget themselves is very surprising."

"But even at the university, Dr. Litter," Mr. Richards said, with a passing thought of his own experience, "town and gown rows take place."

"All the worse," Dr. Litter replied, "all the worse. Of

course there are wild young men at the universities." Dr. Litter himself, it is scarcely necessary to say, had never been wild, the study of the Greek particles had absorbed all his thoughts. "Why," he continued, "young men should condescend to take part in disgraceful affrays of this kind passes my understanding. Mr. Wire, you will inform Williams that for the rest of the week no boy is to go to fields."

So saying, he strode off in the direction of his own door, next to the archway, for the conversation had taken place at the foot of the steps leading into school from Little Dean's Yard. There was some grumbling when the head-master's decision was known; but it was, nevertheless, felt that it was a wise one, and that it was better to allow the feelings to calm down before again going through Westminster between Dean's Yard and the field, for not even the most daring would have cared for a repetition of the struggle.

Several inquiries were made as to the lad who had brought the news of the fight, and so enabled the reinforcements to arrive in time; and had he been discovered a handsome subscription would have been got up to reward his timely service, but no one knew anything about him.

The following week, when cricket was resumed, no molestation was offered. The better part of the working-classes who inhabited the neighborhood were indeed strongly in favor of the "boys," and liked to see their bright young faces as they passed home from their cricket; the pluck too with which they had fought was highly appreciated, and so strong a feeling was expressed against the attack made upon them, that the rough element deemed it better to abstain from further interruption, especially as there were three or four extra police put upon the beat at the hours when the "boys" went to and from Vincent Square.

It was, however, some time before the "great fight" ceased to be a subject of conversation among the boys. At five minutes to ten on the morning when Dr. Litter had put a stop to fields, two of the younger boys—who were as usual, just before school-time, standing in the archway leading into Little Dean's Yard to warn the school of the issuing out of the head-master—were talking of the fight of the evening before; both had been present, having been fagging out at cricket for their masters.

"I wonder which would lick, Norris or Barkley. What a splendid fight it would be!"

"You will never see that, Fairlie, for they are cousins and great friends. It would be a big fight, and I expect it would be a draw. I know who I should shout for."

"Oh, of course, we should all be for Norris, he is such a jolly fellow; there is no one in the school I would so readily fag for. Instead of saying, 'Here, you fellow, come and pick up balls,' or, 'Take my bat up to fields,' he says, 'I say, young Fairlie, I wish you would come and pick up balls for a bit, and in a quarter of an hour you can call some other under school boy to take your place,' just as if it were a favor, instead of his having the right to put one on if he pleased. I should like to be his fag; and he never allows any bullying up at Richards'. I wish we had him at Sargent's."

"Yes, and Barkley is quite a different sort of fellow. I don't know that he is a bully, but somehow he seems to have a disagreeable way with him, a cold, nasty, hard sort of way; he walks along as if he never noticed the existence of an under school boy, while Norris always has a pleasant nod for a fellow."

"Here's Litter."

At this moment a door in the wall under the archway opened, and the head-master appeared. As he came out the five or six small boys standing round raised a tremen-

dous shout of "Litter's coming." A shout so loud that it was heard not only in college and the boarding-houses in Little Dean's Yard, but at Carr's across by the archway, and even at Sutcliffe's shop outside the yard, where some of the boys were purchasing sweets for consumption in school. A fag at the door of each of the boarding-houses took up the cry, and the boys at once came pouring out.

The doctor, as if unconscious of the din raised round him, walked slowly along halfway to the door of the school; here he was joined by the other masters, and they stood chatting in a group for about two minutes, giving ample time for the boys to go up school, though those from Carr's, having much further to go, had to run for it, and not unfrequently had to rush past the masters as the latter mounted the wide stone steps leading up to the school.

The school was a great hall, which gave one the idea that it was almost coeval with the abbey to which it was attached, although it was not built until some hundreds of years later. The walls were massive, and of great height, and were covered from top to bottom with the painted names of old boys, some of which had been there, as was shown by the dates under them, close upon a hundred years. The roof was supported on great beams, and both in its proportions and style the school was a copy in small of the great hall of Westminster.

At the furthermost end from the door was a semicircular alcove, known as the "shell," which gave its name to the form sitting there. On both sides ran rows of benches and narrow desks, three deep, raised one above the other. On the left hand on entering was the under school, and, standing on the floor in front of it, was the armchair of Mr. Wire. Next came the monitor's desk, at which the captain and two monitors sat. In an open drawer in front of the table were laid the rods, which were not unfrequently

called into requisition. Extending up to the end were the seats of the sixth. The "upper shell" occupied the alcove; the "under shell" were next to them, on the further benches on the right-hand side. Mr. Richards presided over the "shell." Mr. Sargent took the upper and under fifth, who came next to them, and "Johnny," as Mr. Johns was called, looked after the two fourths, who occupied benches on the right hand of the door.

By the time the masters entered the school all the boys were in their places. The doors were at once shut, then the masters knelt on one knee in a line, one behind the other, in order of seniority, and the junior queen's scholar whose turn it was knelt in front of them, and in a loud tone read the Lord's Prayer in Latin. Then the masters proceeded to their places, and school began, the names of all who came in late being taken down to be punished with impositions.

So large and lofty was the hall that the voices were lost in its space, and the forms were able to work without disturbing each other any more than if they had been in separate rooms. The sixth only were heard apart, retiring into the library with the doctor. His seat, when in school, was at a table in the center of the hall, near the upper end.

Thus Westminster differed widely from the great modern schools, with their separate class-rooms and lecture-rooms. Discipline was not very strict. When a master was hearing one of the forms under him the other was supposed to be preparing its next lessons, but a buzz of quiet talk went on steadily. Occasionally, once or twice a week perhaps, a boy would be seen to go up from one of the lower forms with a note in his hand to the head-master; then there was an instant pause in the talking.

Dr. Litter would rise from his seat, and a monitor at once brought him a rod. These instruments of punishment were about three feet six inches long; they were

formed of birch twigs, very tightly bound together, and about the thickness of the handle of a bat; beyond this handle some ten or twelve twigs extended for about eighteen inches. The doctor seldom made any remark beyond giving the order, "Hold out your hand."

The unfortunate to be punished held out his arm at a level with his shoulder, back uppermost. Raising his arm so that the rod fell almost straight behind his back, Dr. Litter would bring it down, stroke after stroke, with a passionless and mechanical air, but with a sweeping force which did its work thoroughly. Four cuts was the normal number, but if it was the third time a boy had been sent up during the term he would get six. But four sufficed to swell the back of the hand, and cover it with narrow weals and bruises. It was of course a point of honor that no sound should be uttered during punishment. When it was over the doctor would throw the broken rod scornfully upon the ground and return to his seat. The junior then carried it away and placed a fresh one upon the desk.

The rods were treated with a sort of reverence, for no junior queen's scholar ever went up or down school for any purpose without first going over to the monitor's table and lightly touching the rod as he passed.

Such was school at Westminster forty years since, and it has but little changed to the present day.

CHAPTER II.

A COLD SWIM.

It is winter. Christmas is close at hand, and promises to be a bitterly cold one. The ice has formed smooth and black across the Serpentine, and a number of people are walking along by its banks, looking forward to some grand skating if the frost does but hold two days longer. The sky is blue, and the sun shining brightly; the wind is fresh and keen; it is just the day when people well-clad, well-fed, and in strong health, feel their blood dancing more freely than usual through their veins, and experience an unusual exhilaration of spirits. Merry laughter often rises from the groups on the bank, and the air rings with the sharp sound made by pieces of ice sent skimming by mischievous boys over the glassy surface, to the disgust of skaters, who foresee future falls as the result of these fragments should a slight thaw freeze them to the surface.

Among those walking by the edge of the ice were Frank Norris and Fred Barkley; with them was a bright-faced girl of some fourteen years old. Alice Hardy was cousin to both the young fellows, and was a ward of their uncle, Captain Bayley, an old and very wealthy retired officer of the East India Company Service. His fortune had not been acquired in India, but had descended to him from his father, of whom he had been the youngest son. His elder brothers had died off one by one, all unmarried or childless, and soon after he obtained his commission he was

recalled home to take his place as the next heir to his father's estates; then he had married.

Soon after he succeeded to the property his wife died, leaving him a little girl, who was called Ella after her. Captain Bayley was hot and passionate. His daughter grew up fiery and proud. Her father was passionately fond of her; but just when she reached the age of twenty, and had taken her place as one of the leading belles of Worcestershire, she disappeared suddenly from the circle of her acquaintances. What had happened no one ever knew. That there had been some terrible quarrel was certain. It was understood that Captain Bayley wished no questions to be asked. Her disappearance was a nine days' wonder in Worcestershire. Some said she had turned Roman Catholic and gone into a convent; others that she must have eloped, although with whom no one could guess. But at last the subject died out, until two years later Captain Bayley and his household appeared in mourning, and it was briefly announced that his daughter was dead.

Captain Bayley went about as before, peppery, kind-hearted, perhaps a little harder and more cynical than before, but a very popular personage in Worcestershire. Those who knew him best thought him the most altered, and said that although he appeared to bear the blow lightly he felt deeply at heart the death of his daughter. His nearest heirs now were his two nephews, Frank Norris and Barkley, sons of his married sisters. Alice Hardy bore no relation to him. For some years speculation had been rife as to which of his two nephews he would select as his heir.

Two years before this story begins Alice Hardy's father and mother had both died of typhoid fever, leaving Captain Bayley as guardian to their daughter. Somewhat to the surprise of his friends the old officer not only accepted the trust, but had Alice installed at his house, there to be educated by a governess instead of being sent to school.

But although in a short time she came to be regarded as the daughter of the house, no one thought that Captain Bayley would make her his heiress, as she had inherited a considerable fortune from her father; and the two lads at Westminster were still regarded as rivals for the heirship.

Captain Bayley had never been on good terms with either of his brothers-in-law; both had been merchants in the city, and the old officer considered that his sisters had made mesalliances in marrying them. Frank's father and mother had died within a few months of each other, when he was about twelve years old; Captain Bayley's house had since been his home. Fred was often invited to stay with his uncle down in Worcestershire, and his London house in Eaton Square was always open to him. Frank had never counted on the probability of his uncle leaving him any money. Certainly he never for a moment built castles in the air founded upon the chance of the inheritance. His father had been an easy-going and somewhat careless man, and would sometimes laugh with the boy in speaking of his future and predicting what he would do if he were come into old Bayley's estates. None of the captain's intimates could—had they been asked—have declared a preference for the chances of either lad. Fred was certainly the cleverest. He had gone into college head of his year, and would have been captain, had not one of those of the year before him, who had got into college under age, elected to stay a year longer at school, and therefore by right became captain, while Fred had to be content with the honors of head monitor. Frank, on the other hand, had failed to get into college at all, and had remained a town boy.

Although it could not be said of Fred that in any open way he laid himself out to gain his uncle's favor, he was yet decidedly more attentive than was Frank, and would give up any other engagement he might have if Captain

Bayley invited him to stay the Saturday and Sunday in Eaton Square, while Frank went carelessly his own way. And while there was nothing in the smallest degree servile in Fred's manner—for this indeed Captain Bayley would have instantly noticed and resented—there was just that slight deference which a young fellow should exhibit in conversation with an elder, while Frank on the other hand, carelessly expressed his own opinion and ideas, which often differed very widely from those of the old officer.

Captain Bayley's own manner evinced no shade of partiality for one nephew over the other; and although Alice had a sort of faint suspicion that Frank, who was certainly her own favorite, was also that of her uncle, she could have given no reason for her belief.

In person the cousins were remarkably dissimilar. Frank was two inches the tallest, and had a still greater advantage in width. It was clear that he would grow into a big man, but his figure was at present loose and unformed; he had dark brown hair, with a slight wave, and would hardly have been called good-looking, were it not for his open, fearless expression and merry smile.

Fred's figure, although less strongly built, was far more formed, and it was probable that years would effect but little change in it. There was a sinew and wire in his frame which would have told an athlete of great latent strength in the slight figure. His hair was light, his features clear and sharply cut, and the face a decidedly intellectual one. His manner was somewhat cold and restrained, but pleasant and courteous to men older than himself; both young fellows carried themselves well, with a certain ease of bearing, and that nameless air of command which distinguish most young men who have passed through the upper forms of a great public school.

Both lads had their circle of friends and admirers at school, but Frank's was by far the largest. He was indeed

universally popular, which was far from being the case with his cousin. Upon the other hand, while Frank seemed to be a sort of common property of the school, it was somehow esteemed by those in Barkley's set a special distinction to be admitted to his friendship.

But the party of three young people have been left long enough walking by the edge of the Serpentine. Presently they saw a knot of people gathered ahead; the number increased as others ran up.

"What's up, I wonder?" Frank said. "Look out there on the ice, Alice. You see that hole; there is something moving—there's a dog's head, I declare. Poor brute! it has run out after a stick, I suppose, and the ice has given under it."

"Poor little thing!" Alice exclaimed pitifully, "can't it get out? Do you think it will be drowned, Frank? Can nothing be done for it?"

"The best thing you can do, Alice," Fred replied, as Frank stood looking at the dog, who tried several times, but in vain, to scramble out, the ice each time breaking with its weight, "will be to turn and walk away; there is no use standing here harrowing your feelings by watching that poor little brute drown."

"Can nothing be done, Frank?" Alice again asked, paying no heed to Fred's suggestion.

"That is just what I am thinking," Frank replied. "You stop here, Alice, with Fred. I will go on and see what they are doing."

"Can't I go with you, Frank?"

"You had better stop here," Frank replied; "the crowd is getting thick there, and they are a roughish lot. Besides, you will not be able to see over their heads, and can do no good; so just do as I bid you."

The girl remained obediently with her cousin Fred, while Frank went off at a run toward the group.

"Frank orders you about just as if you were his fag," Fred said, with a smile which had in it something of a sneer.

"I don't mind," the girl said stanchly, "it's Frank's way, and I like it; at any rate one always knows what Frank means, and he always means well."

"That is as much as to say, Alice, that you don't always understand what I mean, and that I don't always mean well," Fred Barkley said in a quiet tone, but with a little flush of anger in his usually somewhat pale cheeks.

"No, I don't know that I mean that," Alice said carelessly; "but I do not always understand what you mean, though I always understand what you say."

"I should have thought that was the same thing," Fred replied.

"Should you?" Alice rejoined. "Well I shouldn't, that's all."

As Frank Norris approached the group he began to unbutton his collar and waistcoat.

"It will be a beastly cold swim," he grumbled to himself, "but I can't see the poor little brute drowned, and drowned he certainly will be if no one goes in for him. It's no distance to swim, and I should think one could wade to within twenty yards of him; but it certainly will be horribly cold." And he gave a shiver of anticipation as he looked at the smooth frozen surface.

With some little difficulty Frank pushed his way through to the center of the group by the water's side. A little girl, poorly dressed, was standing crying bitterly; a cripple boy in a box upon wheels was trying to pacify her, while another who had taken off his coat and waistcoat, and laid them in the lap of the cripple, was unlacing his boots.

"Are you going in, young un?" Frank said, as he joined them.

"Yes, sir; I am going in for Flossy. She belongs to this little girl, who is one of our neighbors."

"Can you swim well?" Frank asked, "for the water will be bitterly cold."

"Yes," the boy answered confidently, "I goes regularly for a swim above Vauxhall Bridge in the summer, and keeps on until the water gets too cold. I can do that fast enough. I suppose the ice will break right enough," and he looked up inquiringly at Frank.

"Yes, it will break with your weight easily enough; you will have to raise yourself a little so as to break it before you. You will have to put some weight on, for it is nearly half an inch thick; I expect there is a thin place where the dog has fallen in—a spring underneath, most likely, so a mere skin has formed.

"Look here, young un, I was going in if you hadn't. I shall get my boots ready to kick off now, so don't you be frightened if you get numbed with the cold, or a touch of cramp; just sing out and I will be with you in a minute."

The cripple looked with pleasure up into Frank's face.

"It is very good of you, sir, for you don't know the dog as Evan does. Ah! I know your face, sir," he broke off, "I saw you in the fight down by our place at Westminster, when Evan ran up and fetched some more of your chaps —and just in time they were too."

"Oh! was it your brother who brought that news?" Frank said quickly; "then I owe him one, and if I go in to fetch him out we shall be only quits."

Evan had by this time entered the water, breaking the ice before him as he went.

"My eye, ain't it cold!" he said, half-turning round, "seems to nip one's legs up regular. All right, Flossy," he shouted to the dog, as he continued his way out, in answer to a pitiful whine of the struggling animal.

For the first few paces Evan's progress was easy enough; but when he got so deep that he could no longer break the ice with his foot his difficulties began, and it was only by

flinging himself down upon it that he was able to break it. A few yards further on the water was up to his chin. He was now breaking the ice by trying to climb upon it. Frank was watching him closely, and noticed that he no longer proceeded about his work deliberately, but with a hurried and jerky action, as if he felt his strength failing him. Frank pulled off his coat and waistcoat, and handed them to the cripple, kicked off his boots, and stood in readiness to plunge in.

The crowd had at first cheered the lad as he made his way from the shore; some still uttered shouts of encouragement, others saw that he was getting exhausted, and called to him to return. Suddenly the boy seemed to lose his power altogether, held on to the edge of the ice, and cast a despairing look toward the shore. Then gradually his head disappeared under the water; but Frank was already halfway toward him. A few strides had taken him through the shallow water, and he swam with vigorous strokes through the floating fragments to the end of the line of broken water; then he too disappeared for a moment. A dead silence reigned through the crowd; but when two heads appeared above the water together, a ringing cheer broke out. Carrying his senseless companion, Frank swam back to shore.

"Take off his wet clothes," he said, as he handed his burden to some of the men. "Wrap him up in my coat and his own, and then run with him up to the Humane Society's house, they will bring him round in no time; it is cold, not drowning."

Then he looked again across the water. The little dog was swimming feebly now, its nose scarcely above the surface. It had given a plaintive cry of despair as it saw those who had approached so near turn back, for there were but some five yards between the spot where the boy's strength had failed and the circle which it had broken in its efforts to climb out.

"I can't be colder than I am," Frank said to himself, "so here goes."

Accordingly he again dashed into the water and swam to the end of the narrow passage; a few vigorous strokes broke the intervening barrier of ice. He seized the little dog, put it on the ice, and with a push sent it sliding toward the shore, and then turned and swam back again. It was only just where the dog had fallen in that the ice was too weak to bear its weight, and, after lying for two or three minutes utterly exhausted, it scrambled to its feet and made its way to the bank, where it was soon wrapped in the apron of its delighted mistress.

Frank, on reaching the shore, was scarcely able to stand, so benumbed were his legs by the cold. His cousins had made their way through the crowd to the spot.

"Oh, Frank," Alice exclaimed, "what a mad thing for you to do. Oh! I am so pleased you did it—but oh, you do look cold! What will you do?"

"I am all right, Alice," Frank said, as cheerfully as his chattering teeth would allow him to speak. "You go home with Fred; I shall get a hot bath and have my clothes dried at the receiving-house, and shall be as right as a trivet in half an hour. There, good-by!"

Frank walked stiffly at first, but was presently able to break into a run, which he kept up until he reached the establishment of the Royal Humane Society. His first question, as he entered, was for the boy.

"He will do, sir," the attendant answered, "we popped him at once into a hot bath we had ready, and he has opened his eyes, and is able to speak; we have just got him into bed between warm blankets, and now it's your turn."

In another minute Frank was in the bath from which the boy had just been taken, for there was no time to prepare another. For the first minute or two he felt an intense pain as the blood flowed back into his chilled

limbs, then a delightful sensation of warmth and comfort stole over him; a glass of hot brandy and water completed his cure, and a few minutes later he felt that he was fast going off to sleep in the warm blankets between which he was laid.

Before the crowd whom the incident on the Serpentine had gathered broke up, one or two of those present went among the rest and collected a subscription for the lad who had gone in after the dog. Nearly two pounds were collected in silver and coppers, and handed over to the cripple to give to his brother. Fred Barkley dropped in five shillings, and Alice Hardy the same sum. Then after walking to the receiving-house, and hearing that Frank and the lad had both recovered from the effects of the cold, and would probably be all right after a few hours' sleep, they returned home, Alice in a high state of excitement over the adventure which she had witnessed, Fred silent and gloomy.

He accompanied Alice to Eaton Square, and was present when she related to her uncle the story of the lad going in to rescue the dog, and of Frank going in to rescue the boy, and of his afterward returning to set free the dog. Upon the way home he had appeared to Alice to take the matter exceedingly quietly, but he now, somewhat to her surprise, appeared almost as enthusiastic as herself, and spoke in terms of high admiration of Frank's conduct. Captain Bayley, as was usually the case with him, took a view of the matter entirely opposed to that of the speakers.

"Stuff and nonsense!" he said. "You call that a gallant action? I call it a foolish boy's trick. What right has Frank to risk getting rheumatic fever, and being laid up as a cripple for life, merely to save a dog?"

"But he went in to save a boy, uncle," Alice said indignantly.

"Pooh, pooh!" the old officer exclaimed, "the boy would

never have gone in if he hadn't encouraged him. That makes the case all the worse. Frank not only risked catching rheumatism himself, but he risked the life of that boy by encouraging him to do such a foolish action. It was a hair-brained business altogether, sir; and I am glad you had the wisdom, Fred, to keep out of it. The idea of two lives being risked to save that of a wretched cur is too absurd; if you had offered the girl who owned it five shillings to buy another it would have been more sensible."

"I don't believe you mean what you say a bit, Uncle Harry," Alice exclaimed indignantly. "I believe if you had been there, and had heard that poor little dog's cries as we did, you would have gone in yourself. I am sure I would if I had been a man."

"I always observe, my dear," Captain Bayley said sarcastically, "that women would do wonderful things if they had only been born men. Nature appears to be always making mistakes by putting the dauntless and heroic spirits into female bodies, and *vice versa*."

"I don't like you when you talk like that, Uncle Harry —that is, I shouldn't like you if I thought you meant it; but you only talk so out of contradiction. If I had said I thought Frank was very foolish for having gone into the water, you would have taken the opposite side directly."

"You are an impudent puss, Miss Alice," her uncle retorted, "and I shall have to tell Miss Lancaster that unless she can keep you in better order I shall have to send you to school. You appear to have been born without the bump of veneration."

"I would venerate you ever so much, Uncle Harry," the girl replied, laughing, "if you would always be good and reasonable; but I cannot venerate you when you are contrary and disagreeable, and say things you don't mean."

As Fred Barkley walked home, he wondered again and again to himself whether Captain Bayley had meant what

he said, and whether this act of Frank's would raise him in his opinion or the contrary; but he flattered himself that, at any rate, no harm had been done, for his own advocacy of his cousin could not but have placed him in the most favorable light.

Fred Barkley was shrewd, but his power of reading character was, as yet, by no means perfect, and his uncle's changing moods baffled the power of analysis. He would not have been pleased had he known that at that very moment the old officer was walking up and down his library, muttering to himself: "I would give a good deal if there were a glass window at that boy Fred's heart, that I could see what it is really made of. His head is strong enough; nature has given him a fair share of brains, but, unless I am greatly mistaken, there is a very grievous deficiency in his allowance of heart.

"I don't believe the boy ever spoke spontaneously from the time he learned to talk, but that every word he says is weighed before it passes through his lips, and its effect calculated; whereas Frank never thinks at all, but just blurts out the words which come to hand. It is curious how much more Alice takes to him than to Fred; for he bullies her and orders her about as if she were one of his fags, while Fred is as courteous and polite to her as if she were a young countess. I suppose it is instinct, for children's opinions about people are seldom far wrong. I thought when I brought Alice here that she would help me to settle the problem."

Frank and Evan Holl woke at about the same time, after sleeping for some hours; their clothes had been dried for them, and they at once began to dress.

"How do you feel now, young un?" was Frank's first inquiry as they sat up in their beds.

"I dunno how I feels," Evan replied. "I hardly knows where I am, or how I got here, though I do seem to

remember something about this 'ere place too. Oh yes!" he exclaimed suddenly, "I was trying to fetch out poor little Flossy, and the ice would not break, and I got colder and colder, and then I don't seem to remember any more except somehow that I was here with people standing round me, and I swallowed something hot and went off to sleep. Ah yes! you were the gentleman as said you would come in after me if I sang out."

"And I did come in," Frank said smilingly, "and only just in time I was, for you did not sing out, but went right down without a word. It was lucky you did not get under the ice."

"And Flossy," the boy said suddenly, "did she go down too?"

"No," Frank answered, "I went in again and got her out, after I had brought you back to shore."

"Well, you are a brick!" the boy said, "a regular downright un, and no mistake. I wonder how Harry got back; it would be a job for him to wheel hisself all the way back to Westminster."

"Oh, I expect he got some one to help him," Frank said; "and the little girl would be able to help shove him along."

"Yes, she would," Evan replied, "she can shove him by herself along a pavement, and I expect that he and she atween them would be able to get along. Lor! how them things of yours have shrunk, to be sure."

"They have, a bit," Frank said, looking down at his trousers, which were halfway up to his knees; "but it don't matter much, it's getting dark now, and I can take a cab when I get out of the Park. Your clothes don't seem to have suffered so much, they seem plenty large enough for you now."

"Yes," Evan said, with a satisfied air, "and a good job too; mother always will have my clothes so big, cos of my growing. She always seems to think one will grow sudden into a man afore one's things wear out."

Frank and the lad walked together as far as Albert Gate; here they separated, Frank taking a cab home, while Evan, whistling a popular air in a high key, took his way to Westminster. On arriving home he was greeted with enthusiasm by Harry, but Mrs. Holl was not inclined to view his adventure favorably.

"It's all very well to care for dogs, Evan, and I ain't a-saying as Carrie Hill's dog ain't a nice little critter; but when it comes to getting into the freezing water arter it, I don't hold to it no way. Then you might have gone and got drowned—and you would have got drowned too, Harry tells me, if that young gent hadn't been and gone after you; and then this blessed minute I should have been breaking my heart about you, and you down underneath the ice in the bottom of the Serpentine. There ain't no reason in it, my boy. Harry here thinks different about it, and will have it that I ought to be proud of yer; but he ain't a mother, and so can't understand a mother's feelings—and your clothes pretty nigh spoiled too, I'll be bound."

"Well, mother, if they are," Harry said cheerfully, "Evan can buy some more. Here, Evan; here are thirty-eight shillings and ninepence halfpenny, and it's all your own."

"Crikey!" Evan gasped, looking in astonishment at the pile of money in Harry's lap. "Why, where did all that 'ere money come from?"

"That was collected in the crowd, Evan, after you were carried away, and they gave it to me to give to you. I did not quite like your taking money for doing such a thing, but of course as it was given for you I had nothing to say to it."

Evan burst into a wild dance expressive of delight. He had none of his brother's scruples in respect to the money.

"My eye!" he exclaimed at last, "thirty-eight bob and

some coppers to do just as I likes with. I am a rich man, I am; I shall have to get some 'igh collars and come the swell. I suppose it won't run to a carriage and pair, mother, or to a welvet gownd for you, that would be splendatious. Just fancy, mother, a gownd all over welvet, and just the same color as the sodgers' coats. My eye! won't that be grand?"

"And a nice sight I should look in it," Mrs. Holl said, laughing at the thought of herself in scarlet robes. "When dad comes home we will talk over with him what's the best way of laying out this money. It's yours to do as you likes with, but I ain't a-going to have it fooled away, so don't you make any mistake about that."

CHAPTER III.

A CRIPPLE BOY.

JOHN HOLL returned from work a few minutes after Evan came in. John Holl was a dustman. A short, broadly-built man, with his shoulders bowed somewhat from carrying heavy baskets up area steps. His looks were homely, and his attire far from clean; but John was a good husband and father, and the great proportion of the many twopences he daily received as *douceurs* for discharging his duties were brought home to his wife, as was all the weekly money, instead of being exchanged for liquor at the public-house.

Sarah Holl added to the family income by going out charring. She was a big woman, with a rough voice, and slipshod in walk; her hands were red and hard from much scrubbing and polishing, and she was considered generally by the servants in the establishments at which she worked to be a low person. But Sarah's heart was in the right place; her children loved her, and her husband regarded her as a treasure.

It was not until John Holl had changed his dirt-stained clothes, and had freshened himself up with a copious wash, had put on a pair of list slippers of Sarah's manufacture in place of his heavy boots, and had seated himself by the fire with his long pipe alight, while Sarah bustled about getting the tea, that he was informed of the important events which had taken place; for John, like many more distinguished men, had his idiosyncrasies, and one of these

was that he hated to be, as he called it, "hustled," before he had tidied up. John was not quick of comprehension, and could not give due weight to what was said to him while engaged in the important work of changing; therefore all pieces of family news were reserved until he had taken his seat and his pipe was fully alight. Then Mrs. Holl began:

"What do you think, John, Evan 'as been a-doing to-day?"

John gave a grunt, to signify that he would prefer hearing the facts to wasting his brain-power in random guesses.

"Why, he has been in the Serpentine, and was nigh drowned, and had to be taken to the 'Mane Society and put into a hot bath, and all his clothes shrunk that much as you never seed."

"I thought the ice weren't strong enough to bear," John said, taking his pipe from his mouth; "one of my mates tells me as he heard a chap going along with skates say as it weren't strong enough on the Serpentine to hold a cat."

"No more it ain't, John; but Carrie Hill's little dog run on and fell through, and nothing would do but that Evan must go out and risk his life to fetch it out. And a nice business he made of it; when he got close out to the dog down he went hisself, and would have been drowned as sure as fate if a young gent as was a-standing there hadn't swam out and brought him in. And I think you ought to speak to him, John, for such venturesome ways; he don't mind my speaking no more than the wind a-blowing."

John Holl smoked his pipe in silence for some time, looking solemnly into the fire; the number of facts and ideas presented suddenly to him were too great to be instantly taken in and grappled with.

"And how do you feel now, Evan?" he said at last; "cold right through the bones?"

"No, father; I am as warm as need be; and what do you think? I have got thirty-eight bob and some coppers which they 'scribed for me."

"Did they, now?" John Holl said. Then after taking in this new fact, and turning it over in different lights, he said to his wife, "Well, Sarah, it seems to me that if the people who saw our Evan go into the water subscribed well-nigh upon two pounds for the boy, they must have thought that what he did warn't a thing for him to be jawed for, but a brave, good-hearted sort of action; and I ain't no manner of doubt, Sarah, that that's just what you think it yerself, only you are a bit scared over the thought that he might have been drowned, which is natural and woman-like. It seems to me as Evan has done a wery honorable kind o' action. I know as I should have liked to have done it myself, though I holds that a man can't have too much of hot water and plenty of soap in it, cold water allus giving me the shivers, and being no good for getting out dirt—not where it's ground in pretty thick. I suppose it's cos of this that I didn't larn to swim. Evan, my boy, your father feels proud of yer, and so does your mother—as proud as a peacock—though she don't think it's right to say so."

Whereupon Mrs. Holl, finding to her great inward satisfaction that the paternal sanction and approval had been given to Evan's adventure, felt no longer constrained to keep up a semblance of disapproval, but embraced him with great heartiness, and then wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron. Then came the great point of the disposal of Evan s fortune. His first proposal was to hand it over to his father as a contribution toward the general expenses, but this John Holl peremptorily refused.

"It's your money, boy, to do as you like with; it's earned in a honorable way, and a way to be proud of. You are to do with it just what you likes; it were best not to

spend it foolish, but if you are disposed to spend it foolish, you do so."

"There are such lots of things I should like to buy," Evan said. "I should like to buy mother a new Sunday bonnet, and I should like to get you a pound of bacca; and Winnie wants a new pair of boots and stockings, and there's lots of things I should like to get for Harry, and some warm gloves for Sue, and—and no end of things."

"Two pounds," John Holl said, "is a nice little lump of money, Evan; but when you gets as old as I am you will know as two pounds don't go wery far. My advice to you is this, whatever you get yer sure awhile afterward to want something else, and to wish as you had bought that instead; that's human nature, and it's the same with men, women, and boys—at least that's my 'sperience, and mother will tell you the same. My advice is, give that money to mother to keep for you, say for a month. Well then, every day you can settle fresh what you mean to buy, and that will be most as good as buying it; perhaps toward the end of the month you will have settled yer mind on to something which really seems to you better than all the others; that's my advice."

"And capital good advice too, father," Harry said.

And thus the approval of the two authorities of the family having been obtained, the matter was considered as settled.

"And who was the young gent as went in and fetched you out, Evan?" John Holl asked, when the important business of tea was concluded and he again settled himself to his pipe. "He must have been a good sort; I should like to shake hands with that chap."

"He told me as his name were Frank Norris," Evan replied; "he is one of the scholars we see going along to Vincent Square; I knew him again directly. He was one of those chaps as fought so well the day they got attacked

going back to the school. A fine-looking chap he is too, with a pleasant face, and a nice sort of way about him. No nonsense, you know; he talked just pleasant and nice, as Harry might talk to me, just as if he was a sort of pal, and not a swell no-how."

"I should like to shake hands with him," John Holl repeated; "he saved your life, that's sure enough"—for by this time Harry had related the full details of the affair. "I think, Sarah, as it would be only right and proper, come Sunday, for you and I to go round to that young fellow's house and tell him how we feels about it. If it had been a chap of our own station in life I suppose there ain't nothing we wouldn't do for him, if we saw our way to it; and though I don't see as it's likely as we can do nothing for this young fellow, the least as we can do is to go and tell him what we thinks about it. Did he tell you where he lived, Evan?"

"No, father. He didn't say where he lived; but he writ down in a pocket-book my name and where we lived, and said as how he would look in one of these days and see that I was none the worse for my ducking."

"Well, I hopes as how he will," John said, "but if he don't come soon, we must find him out. I expect his name or his father's name would be down in a 'Rectory, and the name ain't so common a one as there would be likely to be a great many on them living about here; but if there was fifty I would call on them all till I found the right one. I shan't be easy in my mind, not till I have shaken that young chap's hand and told him what I thinks on it. And I am sure your mother feels the same as I do. And now, Harry, take out that fiddle of yours and let's have a tune; my pipe allus seems to draw better and sweeter while you are playing."

One of the children—there were eight in all in the room—fetched Harry's fiddle from the wall. It was a cheap,

common instrument, but even far better judges of music than the Holls would have been able to discern, in spite of its cracked and harsh tone, that the lad who was playing it had a genius for music. It is true that the airs which he was playing, those which the street boys of the day whistled as they walked by, were not of a nature to display his powers. Harry could play other and very different kinds of music; for whenever Evan earned a sixpence by holding a horse, or doing any other odd job, a penny or twopence were sure to go in the purchase of a sheet of music for Harry at the cheap bookstalls. Harry had learned the notes from a second-hand book of instructions which John Holl had bought for him one Saturday night, when the weather had been particularly hot, and people in their desire to get their dust-bins emptied were more liberal than usual. But of an evening, when John was at home, Harry always played popular airs, as his father and family were unable to appreciate the deeper and better music. This he reserved for the time when the children were at school, and mother was either charring or was at the wash-tub.

Sarah used to wonder silently at the sounds which seemed to her to have no particular air, such as she could beat time to with her foot as she worked; but in her heart she appreciated them; they made her feel as if she was in church, and sometimes she would draw her apron across her eyes, wondering all the time what there was in the tones of the fiddle which should make her cry.

Three or four days later, when Harry, as usual, was playing on his violin, and Mrs. Holl was washing, there was a knock at the door.

"Drat it!" Mrs. Holl muttered, "who's a-coming bothering now, just when I am busy?"

"If no one is to come except when you are not busy," Harry laughed, as Mrs. Holl moved toward the door, wip-

ing the lather from her arms and hands, "we shan't have many visitors, for as far as I can see you are always busy.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as Mrs. Holl opened the door, and he saw who was standing without, "it's the gentleman who got Evan out of the water."

"Mrs. Holl?" Frank asked interrogatively, and then, catching sight of Harry, he at once walked across to him and shook him by the hand.

"I hope I am not intruding, Mrs. Holl, but I promised your son to look in and see how he was; and as I had to come down to the school to-day for a book I wanted for my holiday task, I thought it would be a good opportunity to fulfill my promise."

"It is no intrusion, sir, and I am sure I am heartily glad to see yer, and thank ye for coming," Mrs. Holl said, as she dusted an already spotless chair and placed it for her visitor. "My John does nothing every evening but talk of how he wishes he could see you, to tell you how beholden he and me feels to you for having brought our Evan to land just as he was being drowned."

"No thanks are required indeed, Mrs. Holl," Frank said cheerfully, "it was a sort of partnership affair. You see I was going in after the dog, only Evan, who was a sort of friend of the family, had first claim; so we agreed that he should try first and do all the hard work of breaking the ice, and then, if the cold was too much for him, I was to go out and fetch him in and finish the job myself. So you see it was a mutual arrangement, and no particular thanks due to any one. But your son is a plucky young fellow, Mrs. Holl, and he behaved most gallantly. I find, too, from what your son here tells me, that I owe him one for having fetched help up from the school when we were getting the worst of it just opposite your house here. Well, in the first place, how is he? None the worse, I hope, for the cold."

"Not at all, sir. He is out to-day with a friend of ours as 'as got a barrow, and lives in the next street, but who is that hoarse with the cold that he can't speak out of a whisper; so he offered Evan sixpence to go along with him to do the shouting, and a nice shouting he will make; his voice goes through and through my head when he is only a-talking with his brothers and sisters here, and if anything can bring them to the windows it will be his voice. He offered to come round here with the barrow afore they started off this morning, but says I, No, Evan; I have a good name in the street, I hope, and don't wish to be dighted as a nuisance to the neighborhood, nor to have my neighbors accusing me of a-being the cause of fits in their children."

"I don't suppose that it would be as bad as that, Mrs. Holl," Frank said, laughing. "However, if his voice is as loud and clear as that, it is evident that he is not much the worse for his cold bath. I came round partly to see him, partly to know if I could do anything for him; he seems a sharp lad, and I am sure he is as honest as he is plucky. As a beginning, my uncle says he could come into the house as a sort of errand-boy, and to help the footman, until he can hear of some better position for him among his friends."

"I am sure you are very good, sir," Mrs. Holl said gratefully; "I will mention it to his father, and he—— But I doubt whether Evan's steady enough for a place yet, he is allus getting into mischief; there never was such a boy for scrapes; if all my eight were like him I should go clean mad afore the week was out. When he is in the house, as long as he is talking or singing I can go on with my work, but the moment that he is quiet I have to drop what I am a-doing on and look arter him, for he is sure to be up to some mischief or other."

"No, no, mother," Harry put in, laughing; "you are

giving Evan a worse character than he deserves. He is up to fun, as is only natural with one who has got the free use of his limbs, but he never does any real harm."

"No, I don't say that he does real harm, 'Arry," Mrs. Holl replied, "but I do say as at present he is too full of boyish tricks to be of any good in a place, and we should be a-having him back here a week arter he went, and that would be a nice show of gratitude to this gentleman for his kindness."

"I don't suppose he is as bad as you make out, Mrs. Holl; and no doubt he would tame down after a time, just as other boys do. Perhaps a place in a warehouse would be more suitable for him at first.

"And it was you who were playing as I came in," he went on, noticing the violin; "I was wondering who was playing so well. How jolly it must be to play! I wish I could, but I should never have patience to learn. Who taught you?"

"I picked it up myself, sir," Harry replied, "from a book father bought me. You see I have plenty of time on my hands; I don't get out much, except just along the street, for I can't very well get across crossings by myself. The wheels go well enough on a level, but I cannot push them up a curb-stone. But what with reading and fiddling the days pass quickly enough, especially when mother is at home; she is out two or three days a week, and then the time seems rather long."

"I should think so," Frank said; "I should go mad if I were laid up entirely. I am awfully sorry for you. If you are fond of books I shall be glad to let you have some; I have got no end of them, and there they stand on my shelf unopened from year's end to year's end. What sort of books do you like best? Sea stories, or Indians, or what?"

"I should like any story-books, sir," Harry replied, his eyes brightening up with pleasure; "I have read a few

which father has picked up for me at the bookstalls, and I have gone through and through them until I could almost say them by heart. And then tales of travel and history—oh, I love history! to read what people did hundreds of years ago, and how nations grew up step by step, just like children, it is splendid!"

"I am afraid," Frank said, with a laugh, "that I don't care so much for history as you do. Names are hard enough to remember, but dates are awful; I would rather do the toughest bit of construing than have a page of Greek history to get up. Well, I will certainly look you up some books on history and some travels, and will send you some of Marryat's stories. I suppose you do not care for school books; I have got a barrow-load that I shall never want again."

"Oh yes, sir," Harry said eagerly, "I think I should like those best of all. Have you a Virgil, sir? I do like Virgil, and all that story about the siege of Troy. I only had it for a fortnight. Father bought it for me, and then one of the little ones managed somehow to take it out and lose it; she ran out with it for a bit of fun, and we suppose sat down on a doorstep and forgot it."

"But, bless me," Frank exclaimed, "you don't mean to say that you read Virgil in Latin! You are a rum fellow. How on earth did you learn it?"

"I have taught myself, sir," Harry said. "Father is awfully good, and often picks up books for me at old bookstalls. Of course sometimes he gets things I can't make out. But he got twelve once for a shilling, and there was a Latin grammar and dictionary among them; and when I had learned the grammar, it was very easy with the dictionary to make out the sense of some of the Latin books. But of course I often come across things that I don't understand. I think sometimes if some one would explain them to me once or twice, so that I could really

understand how the rules in the grammar are applied, I could get on faster."

"Well, you are a rum fellow!" Frank exclaimed again. "I wish I liked learning as you do, for though I am in the sixth at Westminster, I own that I look upon the classics as a nuisance. Well, now, look here; I have got an hour at present with nothing special to do, so if you like we will have a go at it together. What have you got here?" and he walked across to a shelf on which were a number of books. "Oh! here is a Cæsar; suppose we take that; it's easy enough generally, but there are some stiffish bits now and then. Let's start off from the beginning, and perhaps I may be able to make things clear for you a bit."

In spite of Mrs. Holl's protestations that Harry ought not to trouble the gentleman, the two lads were soon deep in their Cæsar. Frank found, to his surprise, that the cripple boy had a wonderful knack of grasping the sense of passages, but that never having been regularly taught to construe, he was unable to apply the rules of grammar which he had learned. Frank taught him how to do this, how to take a sentence to pieces, how to parse it word by word, and to see how each word depended upon the others, so that even if absolutely in ignorance of the meaning of any one word in a sentence, he could nevertheless parse them unerringly in the order in which they would be rendered in English—could determine the value of each, and their bearing upon one another.

This was quite a revelation to Harry; his face flushed with eagerness and excitement, and so interested were both lads in their work, that the hour was far exceeded before the lesson came to an end by Mrs. Holl interfering bodily in the matter by carrying off the dictionary, and declaring that it was a shame that Harry should give so much trouble.

"It is no trouble at all, Mrs. Holl," Frank said, laugh-

PROPERTY OF MANVERS

ing. "You see one is accustomed a little to teaching, as one often gives one's fag, or any other little chap who asks, a construe, or explains his lesson to him. But I can tell you that there are precious few of them who take it all in as quickly as your son does. Now that I have made myself at home, I will come in sometimes when school begins again, if you will let me, for half an hour and read with Harry. But I don't think he will want any help long. Still, it may help to show him the regular way of getting at things. And now I must hurry off. You will ask Evan to think over what I have said. Here is my address. I wrote it down in case I should find no one in. If he makes up his mind about it before I come again, he had better call on me there; the best time would be between nine and eleven in the morning; I have always finished breakfast by nine, and I have put off my holiday task so long, that I must stick at it regularly two hours a day till school begins again, so he will be pretty sure to find me between nine and eleven. Will you tell your husband not to worry himself about seeing me? I don't want to be thanked, for it was, as I told you, a sort of partnership business between your boy and me."

"Now I call that a downright nice sort of young chap," Mrs. Holl said, as their visitor departed, "good-hearted and good-natured, without no sort of nonsense. He just sits himself down and makes himself at home as if he was one of the family, and I was able to go on with my washing just as if he hadn't been here."

For a time Harry did not answer.

"So, that's a gentleman," he said at last, in a low voice, as if thinking aloud; "I have never spoken to a gentleman before."

"Well, lad," Sarah Holl said, "there ain't much difference between the gentry and other sorts. I don't see very much of them myself in the houses I goes to, but I hears

plenty about them from the servants' talk; and, judging from that, a great many of them 'as just as nasty and unpleasant ways as other people."

"I suppose," Harry said thoughtfully, "there can't be much difference in real nature between them and us; there must, of course, be good and bad among them; but there is more difference in their way of talking than I expected."

"Well, of course, Harry; they have had education, that accounts for it; just the same as you, who have educated yourself wonderful, talks different to John and me and the rest of us."

"Yes," Harry said; "but I am not talking about mistakes in grammar; it's the tone of voice, and the way of speaking that's so different. Now why should that be, mother?"

"I suppose a good deal of it," Mrs. Holl answered, "is because they are brought up in nusseries, and they can't run about the house, or holloa or shout to each other in the streets. D'ye see they are taught to speak quiet, and they hear their fathers and mothers, and people round them, speaking quiet. You don't know, Harry, how still it is in some of them big houses, you seem half afraid to speak above a whisper."

"Yes, but I don't think he spoke lower than I do, mother, or than the rest of us. Oh mother!" he went on, after awhile, "isn't he good? Just to think of his spending an hour and a half sitting here, showing me how to construe. Why, I see the whole thing in a different way now; he has made clear all sorts of things that I could not understand; and he said he would come again too, and I am quite sure that when he says a thing he means to do it. I don't believe he could tell a lie if he tried. And is he not good-looking too?"

"He is a pleasant-looking young chap," Mrs. Holl replied, "but I should not call him anything out of the

way. Now I should call you a better-looking chap than he is, Harry."

"Oh mother, what an idea!" Harry exclaimed, quite shocked at what seemed to him a most disrespectful comparison to his hero.

"It ain't no idea at all," Mrs. Holl rejoined stoutly; "any one with eyes in his head could see that if you was dressed the same as he is you would be a sight the best-looking chap of the two."

"Ah mother!" Harry said, laughing, "you remind me of an old saying I saw in a book the other day, 'A mother's geese are all swans.' "

"I am sure," Mrs. Holl said, in an aggrieved voice, "you ain't no goose, Harry, and if any one else said so I should give them a bit of my mind sharp enough."

Harry did not attempt to argue with her, but with a little laugh turned to his books again, and was soon deep in the mysteries of Cæsar.

The next day a carrier's cart stopped before Mrs. Holl's house, to the great amazement of the neighborhood—for such an occurrence had not been known in the memory of the oldest inhabitant in the street, and quite a crowd of children collected to witness the delivery of a square heavy box of considerable weight at the door.

Harry was almost beside himself with delight as he took out the treasures it contained; and as fully half were story-books, his delight was shared by the rest of the young Holls. It was evening when the cart arrived, and John was just enjoying his first pipe, and he once more uttered the sentiment he had expressed so often during the last four days, "I should like to shake that young chap by the hand."

CHAPTER IV.

AN ADOPTED CHILD.

A FEW days after school had commenced Frank Norris called in again at the Holls'. It was a bright day, and Harry had gone out in his box, and Mrs. Holl was alone.

"Harry will be sorry he is out, sir," was her first greeting to Frank; "he has been looking forward to your coming again. You don't know, sir, how much good you have done him. The boy has generally wonderful good spirits, considering his condition; still, though he don't say naught, I can see sometimes that he isn't never quite happy except when he is working away with his books or playing on that fiddle of his.

"Evan has been and spent all the money as was given him that day at the Serpentine in buying a new fiddle for him. I don't see much in the thing myself, and it seems to me they must have cheated Evan altogether, for it ain't a new un, but an old, brown, dirty-looking thing, as looks as if it had been made nigh fifty years; and they goes and charges him thirty-eight shillings for it, and pretended to make a favor of it, while John only paid seven and sixpence for the one he had before, which was a beautiful new shiny one.

"However, Harry seems delighted with it, and say's it's beautiful soft, and mellow. But what he means I don't know, though I do allow it ain't so squeaky as the other; and sometimes when Harry is playing soft on it, it does sound beautiful. Still, thirty-eight shillings is a big price for an old thing like that."

"Old fiddles are always worth more than new ones, Mrs. Holl. Do you know there are some fiddles two or three hundred years old which could not be bought for less than three or four hundred pounds?"

"My gracious!" Mrs. Holl exclaimed, "three or four hundred pounds for such a thing as a fiddle. I calls it downright wicked."

"He is a wonderful boy that son of yours, Mrs. Holl," Frank said, changing the subject; "a regular genius I should call him. What a pity it is that he is a cripple!"

"Ay, that it is," Mrs. Holl agreed, "and he is a wonderful chap, is Harry. But he ain't no son of mine, Mr. Norris, though he don't know it himself, and I shouldn't like him to be told."

"Then what relation is he, Mrs. Holl, if it is not an impertinent question?"

"He ain't no sort of relation at all, sir," the woman answered.

"Then how came you to bring him up, Mrs. Holl?" Frank asked in surprise.

"Well, sir, it was a very simple matter. But if so be as you care to hear it, I will tell you just how it happened." And, leaning against the mantelpiece, with the red light of the fire thrown up into her face, Mrs. Holl went on very slowly, and speaking as though she almost saw what she was relating.

"Well, sir, it were an evening in April—a cold bitter day. I was sitting here between light and dark, drinking my tea with John, who was just come home from work—John is my husband, you see, sir—when we heard a noise outside in the street. We went out to see what was the matter, and we found a poor young creature, with a baby in her arms, had fallen down in a faint like.

"She was a pretty young thing, sir; and though her dress was poor and torn, she looked as if she had not been

always so. Some one says, 'Take them to the workhouse.' 'No!' says I—for my heart yearned toward the poor young thing—'bring her in here; mayn't we, John?' says I. Well, sir, John did not say nothing, but he took the baby out of her arms and gave it to me, and then he upped and took the poor young creature—she were no great weight, sir—and carried her into the house, and laid her on the bed, as it might be by the window there.

"Well, sir, that bed she never left; she came round a little, and lived some days, but her mind were never rightly itself again. She would lay there, with her baby beside her, and sing songs to herself; I don't know what about, for it were some foreign language. She were very gentle and quiet like, but I don't think she ever knew where she was, or anything about it. She were very fond of baby, and would take it in her arms, and hush it, and talk to it. She faded and faded away, and the doctor said nothing could be done for her; it made my heart ache, sir, and if you will believe me, I would go upstairs and cry by the hour.

"The thought of the little baby troubled me too. I had lost my first little one, sir, and I could not a-bear the thought of the little thing going to the workhouse. So one day I says to John, 'John, when that poor mother dies, for God's sake don't 'ee send the little baby to the workhouse; He has taken away our own little one, and maybe He has sent this one for us to love in his place. Let us take him as our own.' John, he did not say nothing, but he up and gived me a great kiss, and said, 'Sairey, you're a good woman!' which of course, sir," Mrs. Holl put in apologetically, "is neither here nor there, for any mother would have done the same; but it's John's way when he's pleased. That very same night the baby's mother died."

Standing with her rough honest face lit up by the

bright fire-glow she related it, simply, and as a matter of course, all unconscious of the good part she had taken in it, assuming no credit to herself, or seeing that she deserved any.

When she had finished there was a little silence. Frank passed his hand furtively across his eyes, and then shook Mrs. Holl warmly by the hand, saying, "Your husband was right, Mrs. Holl, you are a good woman."

Mrs. Holl looked completely amazed, and stammered out, "Lor' bless you, sir! there wasn't anything out of the way in what I did, and there's scores and scores would do the like. Having just lost my own little one, my heart went out to the poor little thing, and it seemed sent natural like, to fill up the place of the little angel who was gone from us. Bless your heart, sir, there weren't nothing out of the way in that, nothing at all, and we have never had cause to regret it. The boy's a good boy, and a clever boy, and he is a comfort and a help to us; a better boy never lived. But we have always grieved sorely over the accident."

"Then he was not originally lame, Mrs. Holl?" Frank asked.

"Dear me! no, sir, not till he were six years old. It happened this way. I was laid up at the time—I was just confined of Mary, she is my eldest girl—and somehow Harry he went out in the street playing. I don't rightly know how it happened; but never shall I forget when they brought him in, and said that a cart had run over him. John, he was in—which was lucky, for I think I lost my head like, and went clean out of my mind for a bit, for I loved him just like my own. They did not think he would have lived at first, for the cart had gone over the lower part of his body and broke one of his thigh-bones, and the other leg up high. It was a light cart I have heard tell, or it must have killed him.

"He were in bed for months, and, if you will believe me, if ever there was a patient little angel on earth, it was surely Harry. He never complained, and his chief trouble was for my sake. At last he got well; but the doctors said he would never walk again, for they thought there was some damage done to his spine; and sure enough he never has walked. He is always cheerful, and keeps up wonderful, considering.

"He has always been given to reading. John made a shift to teach him his letters, and then the children of the neighbors, they lent him their schoolbooks, and taught him what they knew, and in a short time, bless you, sir, he knew more than them all! He would sit and read for hours together. He is wonderful clever, Harry is."

"Well, Mrs. Holl," Frank said, rising, "I am very much obliged to you for your story; but I must be going now, or else I shall be late for school. Tell Harry I am sorry I missed him, and will look in again soon. Have you thought anything further of what I said about Evan?"

"Yes, sir, and thank you most kindly; but father thinks he had better wait another year or so, till he gets a bit older and steadier. As for them books as you was kind enough to send Harry, the boy must thank you hisself; except when he is playing on his fiddle he is always reading at them, and it is as much as I can do to get him outside the doors. He was never very fond of it, for he thinks people look at him; but since those books has come I have regular to take them away from him, put his cap on his head, and push him outside the door. He will be in a taking that he has missed you to-day."

"Well, good-by, Mrs. Holl, I haven't a moment to lose," and Frank, putting on his hat, made off at a sharp run to school, only arriving just in time to save prayers.

Frank Norris, although a sixth town boy, was not head of Richards', as Johnstone had been longer in that form,

and was consequently senior to him. Johnstone was, however, small and slightly built, and cared little for rowing, cricket, or football. He had gained his place in the sixth by sheer hard work rather than by talent. He was fussy and irritable, with a strong sense of the importance of his position as a sixth town boy and head of Richards'. Between him and Frank there was no cordiality, for it irritated him that the latter was upon all occasions appealed to, and his advice asked in everything relating to games, and all matters of dispute referred to him. Frank, on the other hand, although he at all times gave way to Johnstone in house matters, was constantly annoyed by his continual self-assertion and his irritation at trifles. They were the only two sixth town boys at Richards', but there were three upper "shells," Harris, Travers, and James, and these ranked almost with the sixth, for the great demarcation of the school was between the upper and under "shells," the former having the right to fag.

Frank and Johnstone had each a small room of their own; the three upper "shells" had a room together, but they used Frank's study almost as much as their own; one or other would generally come in to work with him in the evening, and it was here that councils were held as to house matters or knotty points connected with field or water.

"I wish Trafalgar Square wasn't out of bounds," Harris said one evening.

They had finished the work for the next day, and had gathered for a chat in Frank's room before turning into bed. Frank was sitting in a rickety armchair by the fire, Harris on the table, and the other two on the bed.

"Why do you wish so, Harris?" Frank said.

"Why, I should like to go up to see those rows they have pretty nearly every day. Thompson, the home boarder, told me he saw a regular fight there yesterday evening between the police and the Chartists."

"Well, it's no use wishing, because bounds begin at the gate in Dean's yard. I never could understand myself why we should be allowed to go the other way, down the slums, as far as we please, where there is every chance of getting into a row, while we are not allowed to walk quietly up Parliament Street; then we may go along the other way, by the new Houses of Parliament, to Westminster Bridge, and across the bridge to baths; but we may not go out from Dean's yard and walk across in front of the abbey to the bridge. I expect when the rules were made there were no houses built beyond us, and there were fields extending back from the river, while the other way led up to the court. But I should certainly like to go up and see one of those Chartist riots. However, I don't think it can be done; it would be setting a bad example to the young uns, and the chances are ten to one we should run against one of the masters."

"Hardly likely, I should think," Travers said; "it would be shocking bad luck to run against one of them in a crowd like that."

"Well, you see, Travers, we are so preciously conspicuous in these tail-coats; of course it's the custom, and I stick up for old customs; still, I do think it's a ridiculous thing that we should be obliged to wear tail-coats. Of course the jackets for the fellows under the upper 'shell' are all right, but one cannot go on wearing jackets higher than that; still, I do think they might let us wear cut-aways; tail-coats were all right when every one else wore tail-coats, but in our days it is absurd to wear a coat which nobody else wears except for an evening dress. You can tell a fellow a mile off as a Westminster boy by his coat."

"It has its advantages," James said. "Look how Johnstone would lose his importance without his tails, he would look like a plucked jay."

There was a general laugh.

"He is not a bad fellow," Frank replied, "though he does think a good deal of himself. Still, as no one else thinks anything of him, it is just as well he should fancy himself. But never mind that now. No, I don't think there is any chance of our getting to see the fun in Trafalgar Square. I should like to go to one of the halls where those fellows spout, and to get up and say something the other way. Of course one would have to go in a strong body, else there would not be much of us left when we got into the street again. I must have a chat with Perkins about it, he is sure to be up to all that kind of thing."

"Yes, but there would be the trouble of getting in after lock-up."

"Oh, I dare say we might get over that," Harris replied; "the fags would never peach."

"We won't tell them if we can help it," Frank said; "if we go in for any lark of that sort only one of our fags must know it. I can trust young Phillpot to hold his tongue. Well, I will chat it over with Perkins, and see what can be done."

Perkins was a retired prize-fighter who kept a public-house on Bank Side. In a large room attached to the house he gave sparring exhibitions twice a week, with the aid of other fellow-pugilists, and also gave private lessons in the art of self-defense. Bank Side was not out of bounds, but it was strictly against the rules for any boy to enter a public-house; nevertheless, a good many of the Westminster boys had learned boxing from this worthy. There was a private entrance behind the house into what Perkins called his "saloon," and the boys strove to consider that by using this they avoided an infringement of the rule. The fact of their taking lessons was unknown to the master, for indeed at Westminster the boys were at perfect liberty to do as they pleased out of school-time, providing that they did not go out of bounds.

The rules enforcing attendance at fields or water, of abstaining from entering public-houses, and generally of conducting themselves as gentlemen, were left to what may be called their own police, the senior queen's scholars and the sixth form town boys, and these kept a far more rigorous hand over the younger boys than the masters could possibly have done. A vigorous thrashing was the punishment for shirking fields, or for any action regarded as caddish; and it was therefore only the upper "shells" and sixth, who, being free from the operation of the law as to fields and water, were able to frequent Perkins' establishment.

Of those who went there, most of them did so for the genuine purpose of learning boxing; but a few used the place for the purpose of smoking and drinking. But these did so at hours when there was no chance of finding Perkins at work with his pupils, for public feeling would not have tolerated, even in an upper form boy, anything that would have been looked upon as such bad form.

The next morning, after breakfast, Frank walked down to "The Black Dog." He was one of Perkins' best pupils, and the latter had more than once been heard to express his regret that Frank had not been born in a lower class of life.

"He's got the making of a champion in him," the ex-pugilist would say regretfully; "in another five years, when he has got his full height and filled out, I warrant he will fight twelve stone; look how quick he is on his pins; and I tell you I have all my work to do now to guard my head, he hits like lightning, and once or twice has fairly knocked me off my pins. I'd back him now for fifty pounds against any novice in England; and as for pluck, I have never seen him wince, hit him as hard as you will he always comes up smiling. Barkley, he is a good boxer too, but he ain't got temper, sir; he gets nasty if he

has a sharp counter; and though he keeps cool enough, there is an ugly look about his face which tells its tale. He would never keep his temper, and I doubt if he's real game at bottom. I knows my customers, and have never hit him as I hit Norris; I don't want to lose a pupil as pays fair and square, and I know I should mighty soon lose him if I were to let out at him sharp. No, there is bad blood in that chap somewhere."

"Well, Master Norris, and what do you want at this time of the morning?" he said, as Frank, after entering the saloon, rang a bell which sounded in the bar and summoned him to the saloon. "Not a lesson at this time of the day, surely?"

"Not exactly, Perkins, considering I am due at ten o'clock, and therefore have only five minutes to stay. I just dropped in to ask you about something on which you can perhaps advise us."

"Fire away, Master Norris; anything I can do for you you knows as I will."

"I was thinking, Perkins, that it would be a great lark to go up to one of those halls where those Chartist fellows meet, and to hear their speeches."

"I don't see that there would be any lark in it," Perkins replied, "unless you meant getting up a row."

"I don't know that I exactly meant to get up a row; but if there was a row, so much the more lark."

"Well, sir, if I might give my advice, I don't think, if I was you, I would do it in school-time. Your hands can guard your face pretty tidy, I grant you, but the chances is as you would not get out of such a row as that would be without being marked. I knows of a place over the other side of the water, not far from the New Cut, where they meet. Bill Lowe, him as comes here to spar twice a week, yer know, he goes there; he takes up with them Chartist notions, which I don't hold with no ways. I don't see

nothing in them seven pints as would do anything for the ring; and that being so, let it alone, says I. However, Master Norris, since you have a fancy that way I will talk the matter over with him, and then if you really makes up your mind you would like to go, I will get four or five of my lads as can use their mawleys, and we will go in a body.

"Then if there should be a row, I reckon we can fight our way out. There ain't much in them chaps, tailors and shoemakers, and the like; they are always great hands for jaw, them tailors and shoemakers, but I never seed one as I would put five pound on in a twelve-foot ring. Poor undersized creatures, for the most part, but beggars for jaw; but there are some rough uns with 'em, and yer might get badly marked before yer got out."

But Frank's mind was now bent upon it.

"It will be a lark, Perkins, anyhow; things have been rather slow at school lately, and three or four of us have set our minds on it. So if you let me know what evening will suit you, we will be here."

Four evenings later Frank Norris, with the other three boys, slipped out after prayers were over, and started on their expedition. Frank's fag closed the door noiselessly behind them and rebolted it; he had strict orders to take his place at an upper window at eleven o'clock and watch for their return. If when they made their appearance the house was quiet and the lights out, he was to slip down and let them in; if not, they were to go away again and return an hour later. All four boys were in thick pea-jackets, and wore rough caps which they had bought for the purpose.

When they reached Perkins' public-house, the prize-fighter surveyed them closely.

"Ye will pass in a crowd," he said; "but keep your caps well down over yer faces. Now mind, young gents, if there's a row comes over this 'ere business, I ain't to blame in the matter."

"All right, Perkins, but there will be no row."

Being joined by Bill Lowe and three other boxers, they set out together for the New Cut; past the new Houses of Parliament—still in the hands of the builders—over Westminster Bridge, past the flaring lights in front of Astley's, and into the New Cut.

Here, as usual, business was brisk; the public-houses were doing a roaring trade. Rows of costermongers' carts lined the road on either side, and the hoarse shouts of the venders of fruit, vegetables, and shell-fish, mingled with the babel of voices from the throng of people who loitered about the street, which was regarded as the promenade of the neighborhood. Sounds of musical instruments and a loud chorus came from the upper windows of many of the public-houses and from the low music-halls known by the name of "penny gaffs."

It was in front of one of these that the party stopped. Unlike the others, no row of flaring lights burned over the entrance, no posters with huge letters and sensational headings invited the public to enter; one solitary lamp hung over the door, which was kept closed; men were passing in, however, after exchanging a word with one of those stationed at the door.

"It's a private sort of affair," Perkins said; "none ain't supposed to go but those as is in the swim. They pretend to be mighty afraid of the peelers; but, Lor' bless you! the police don't trouble about them. When these chaps gets to making rows in the street, and to kicking up a rumpus, then they will have something to say about it sharp enough; but as long as they merely spout and argue among themselves, the peelers lets them go on. Well, young gents, here we goes."

Bill Lowe advanced first; he was known to the doorkeeper, and the words "All right, mate, friends of mine," were sufficient. He stood aside, and the party entered.

Passing through a passage, they were in a hall some fifty feet long by half as wide; the walls had originally been painted blue, with wreaths of flowers along the top, but these and the roof were so discolored by smoke and dirt that the whole were reduced to a dingy brown. At the end at which they entered was a gallery extending some fifteen feet into the room, at the other end was a raised platform, with a drop curtain. The latter was now raised, and displayed a table with half a dozen chairs. The chairman for the evening was seated in the center of the table. He was a young man with a pale face, eyes bloodshot from many nights spent in the reeking atmosphere of the room, and tumbled hair, which looked as if weeks had passed since it had made the acquaintance of a brush. He had just risen as the party entered; the room, which was fairly filled with men, rang with the applause which had greeted the speaker who had sat down.

"Fellow-workmen," said the chairman—("I wonder what you work at," Frank muttered below his breath; "nothing that requires washing, anyhow.")—"Fellow-workmen, your cheers are evidence how deeply you have been moved by the noble words of my friend Mr. Duggins, and how your blood boils at the hideous slavery to which we are condemned by a tyrannical aristocracy. You will now be addressed by my eloquent friend Mr. Simpkins, boot-closer."

Mr. Simpkins rose. He was a short, round-shouldered man, made still shorter by the bend which he had acquired by the operation of boot-closing; his eyes were small, and sunken in his head; his nose wide and flat, as if in his early youth he had fallen on the edge of a pewter pot, and he too had the appearance of regarding water with as deep an aversion as he viewed the aristocracy.

"Fellow-workmen," he began, "or rather I should say fellow-slaves"—this sentiment was received with a roar of

applause, "the time is approaching when our chains will be broken, when the bloodstained power known as the British Constitution will be rent and trampled under foot, when the myrmidons of power will flee before an uprisen people. They know it, these oppressors of ours; they tremble in their palaces and mansions, where they feast upon the wealth drained from the blood of the people. They know that the day is at hand, and that the millions whose labor has created the wealth of this country are about to reclaim their own."

A roar of applause went up as the speaker paused and mopped his forehead with a red handkerchief. But the applause was suddenly stilled by the sound of the emphatic "Bosh!" which Frank shouted at the top of his voice. Every one turned round, and shouts arose of "Who is that?" "Down with him!" "Turn him out!" "Knock him down!" The orator seized the occasion.

"A spy of the tottering government has intruded upon the deliberations of this assembly, but I tell him I fear him not."

"Never mind, out he goes," one of the men shouted, and all began to press upon the little group standing at the back of the room, and from one of whom the objectionable word had evidently come.

"We are in for a row, Mr. Norris, and no mistake," Perkins said; "the sooner we gets out of this the better."

But this was not so easily done; the crowd had already interposed between them and the door.

"Now stand back," Perkins said, "and let us out. We ain't no spies, and we don't want to hurt any one. Some of you may know me; I am Perkins of the Black Dog, over at Westminster, so you had best leave us alone."

The greater part of those present, however, had imbibed sufficient to render them valorous, and a rush was made upon the party.

Their reception was a warm one; the five prize-fighters struck out right and left, while Frank and his schoolfellows ably seconded them. A tall red-haired fellow, who had singled out Frank, was met by a blow which knocked him off his feet, and he fell backward as if shot. Their vigorous blows drove the leading assailants back, and in spite of their numbers the crowd of angry men recoiled before their handful of opponents.

"Come on," Perkins said, "make for the door; they are breaking up the chairs, and we shall have it hot in a few minutes."

Keeping together, they fought their way, in spite of all opposition, to the door, Perkins leading, while Bill Lowe brought up the rear. They were soon in the open air.

"Now," Perkins exclaimed, "you hook it, gents, as fast as you can; me and Bill will keep the door for a minute." The boys dashed off, and after making at full speed into the Westminster Bridge road, slackened their pace, and walked quietly back to Dean's yard. They were in high glee over their adventure, which all agreed had been a splendid lark, and was the more satisfactory as all had escaped without any mark which would testify against them. It was still early, and they had for two hours to walk the streets until the whistle of the fag at the window told them that all were in bed and quiet, and they might safely make their entry. This was effected without noise; the bolts were slipped into their places again, and with their shoes in their hands, the party went noiselessly up to their rooms.

CHAPTER V.

A TERRIBLE ACCUSATION.

TWO DAYS later, as Frank was about to start for the cricket-field, a small boy, whom he recognized as a son of Perkins, stopped him.

"Father wants to speak to you particular, Mr. Norris."

"All right, young un, I will go round there at once."

Wondering what Perkins could have to say to him, Frank took his way to the public-house.

"What is it, Perkins?" he asked the prize-fighter as the latter let him into his private parlor.

"Well, sir, there's a rumpus over this business as we had the other night."

"How a rumpus, Perkins?"

"Well, sir, there was a tall red-haired chap—leastways I hear as he's tall and red-headed, and is a tailor by trade; his name is Suggs. It seems as how he got knocked down in the scrummage, and was so bad that the police, who came up after you left, took him to hospital; they brought him round all right, but it seems as how the bridge of his nose was broke, and it will be flat to his face for the rest of his life. Now I fancy that's a piece of your handiwork, Mr. Norris; I saw jist such a chap as that go down when you hit him, and I thought to myself at the time what a onener it was."

"Yes, I did knock down just such a fellow," Frank said, "and I am sorry I hit him so hard; I was afraid at the time that I hurt him."

"You should not let out from the shoulder in that sort of way, Mr. Norris," the pugilist said, shaking his head; "you hit like the kick of a horse, and you never know what mayn't come of them sort of blows. No, sir; half-armed hitting is the thing for a general row; it hurts just as much, and is just as good for closing up an eye, but it don't do no general damage, so to speak. Now, sir, there's a row over the business. In course I holds my tongue; but they says as four of the party was young uns, and they guessed as they was gents. Now they puts things together, and have found out as I gives lessons to some of you Westminster gents, and they guesses as some of you was with me. Now, as I tells them, what can they do? They was the first to begin it, and we was only standing on self-defence, that's the way I puts it. No magistrate would look at the charge for a minute. It stands to reason that nine men did not attack four or five hundred. They must have been attacking us, that's clear to any one; and if it was me I should not care the snap of a finger about it—that's what I tells the red-haired tailor when he came here with two of his pals this morning. 'We has as much right to our opinions as you have; you attacks us,' says I, 'and we gives you pepper, that's all about it.' 'His beauty's spoilt for life,' says one of his mates. 'He never had no beauty to spoil,' says I, 'by the look of 'im,' so we got to words. 'They was Westminster boys,' says he. 'That's all you knows about it,' says I. 'I will go to their master,' says he, 'and report the case, and show him my nose,' says he. 'You have got no case to report,' says I, 'and no nose to show.' 'We will see about that,' says he; 'I ain't going to be made an object for the rest of my life for nothing.'

"So we goes on arguing; but at last he lets out that if I bring him a 'tenner' in the course of the week he will shut up. I ain't allowed, of course, Mr. Norris, that any

of you young gents had a hand in the fray, quite the contrary; but he has got it into his head that it is so, and he has made up his mind that he will go to the master. I don't think it likely that they could spot you, for they could hardly have got a fair look at your faces."

"No," Frank said, "I don't suppose they would recognize any of us; but the first thing Litter would do would be to ask us if any of us were concerned in the affair. It's a beastly nuisance, for just now I happen to be completely cleaned out, and I am sure I do not know where I could get ten pounds from."

"If it had been any other time I could have helped you, Mr. Norris, but I paid my brewers only last night, and I ain't got two quid in the house; but I might manage to get it for you by the end of the week, if there ain't no other way. But my advice to you would be, let the red-haired man go to the master; if you keep your own counsel, no one can swear it out against you."

"No, I won't do that, Perkins," Frank said, "it's known in the house; besides, if I am asked I must say it's me. Thank you for your offer. I will see you again in a day or two."

Frank walked back to his boarding-house, moody and dejected. Harris was in his room working. Frank told him what had happened.

"This is a bad business indeed," Harris said. "By Jove! if it comes out, Litter would expel the four of us. What is to be done? I am sure I don't know."

"I don't see where I am to get ten pounds; I have only got fifteen shillings now."

"I have only seven and sixpence," Harris said. "I have paid Shotten's bill for last term this week, and I know that Travers and James have not much more than I have. We might get something on our watches; but they are all silver, and I don't suppose we could get more than a

pound apiece for them. But still that's something, and with our united silver would make up six pounds."

"I could get a pound or two from my cousin," Frank said; "Fred always seems to be well supplied with money."

"Because he never spends any," Harris said. "I am mistaken if Barkley will lend you anything."

"Oh, he will lend it if he's got it." But Harris turned out to be right. After the next school Frank laid the case before his cousin, who listened in silence to the story.

"I am very sorry, Frank," he said when he had finished, "but I am entirely out of money at present."

"I thought you always had money," Frank said shortly.

"Not always," Fred replied quietly. "As you know, I am fond of books, and last week I paid my bill for that edition of Shakespeare that you were admiring."

Fred Barkley had indeed a library of books of which he was very proud, and which was worth more than all those belonging to the rest of the boys up college together. Frank was too proud to suggest that his cousin could, if he chose, easily raise the amount required on a few of his favorites, and left the room without saying a word.

Fred Barkley did not continue the work upon which he was engaged after his cousin had left the room, but sat looking fixedly at the papers before him.

"This is a grand opportunity," he muttered to himself, "and I should be a fool if I let it slip. The question is, how is it best to be managed. I should be an idiot indeed if I cannot put a spoke into Master Frank's wheel somehow."

The next day the sixth form, as usual, went into the library to do their construing. Dr. Litter, according to his usual custom, walked up and down hearing them and asking questions, the form sitting at their desks, which ran round the room. The doctor was a fidgety man, and was always either twirling his watch-chain or eyeglass, or

rattling the keys, knife, and other articles in his trousers pockets. Being perfectly conscious of the habit, he often emptied the contents of his pocket on to the table before starting to walk about the room, and this he did on the present occasion.

As often happened, he was called from the room in the course of the lesson, and, ordering the boys to get up twenty additional lines of their Greek play in his absence, he left the room and did not return for half an hour. While he was away the boys moved freely about, some to consult each other's lexicons, others to chat. When Dr. Litter returned the lesson was finished, and the boys went back to the great schoolroom.

On the following morning Frank Norris received a letter. On his opening it he found, to his astonishment, that it contained only a bank-note for ten pounds, with the words "From a friend." Frank was simply astounded.

Who on earth could have sent him the exact sum of which he stood in need? He at once told his three friends what had occurred, and they were as much astonished as himself. All agreed that it was a perfect Godsend, though how any one could have got to know of his necessity for ten pounds at this special time none could imagine, as this was, as far as they were aware, known only to themselves and Fred Barkley. Frank at once concluded that his cousin must have sent him the money, and immediately sent up college and asked him to come to his room. Fred soon came up, and Frank at once proceeded to thank him for his gift. Fred, however, appeared as surprised as himself, and disclaimed any knowledge whatever of the note.

"I told you, Frank," he said reproachfully, "that I had no money. Do you think that if I had it I would not have given it to you at once, instead of sending it in that roundabout manner? Do you know the handwriting? that may afford you some clew."

"No," Frank said; "the name and address, as well as the words within, are done in printing characters, so that it is impossible to say who wrote them. Well, it is an extraordinary business, and I can only say that I am extremely thankful to the good fairy who has got me out of the scrape."

Frank felt indeed relieved. He felt sure that the head-master would consider such an escapade by boys of the sixth form an unforgivable crime, and that expulsion would follow discovery; and knowing the hot temper of his uncle, he feared that the latter would view the matter in the most serious light. It was therefore with a light heart that he went across to the Black Dog and placed the note in the hands of Perkins, merely saying that he was glad to say that he had been able to get the money to satisfy the red-haired tailor for his loss of beauty.

"It goes agin my heart to give it to him, Mr. Norris; but in course if you decide not to face it out there's nothing for it. I am glad you have got the money together."

A week later one of the monitors informed Frank that the head-master wished to see him in the library. Wondering at this ususual order, Frank at once repaired there. Dr. Litter was sitting at his table, and he raised his eyes gravely as Frank entered.

"Norris," he said, "I have been shocked at what has happened more than at anything which has occurred to me during my head-mastership of Westminster. I may tell you that everything is discovered. Now I leave it to you to make a full and frank confession."

Frank was thunderstruck. So in some way his breaking out of bounds had become known to the head-master. The tailor must have turned traitor and peached after having received his money.

For a minute he stood silent and confounded, while Dr. Litter looked at him gravely.

"I acknowledge, sir," Frank began, "that I broke out of bounds to go to a Chartist meeting, and that I got into a row there. I am very sorry now, but I really meant no harm by it; it was a foolish lark."

"And is that all you have to confess?" Dr. Litter said quietly.

"Yes, sir," Frank said in surprise, "I don't know that there's anything else for me to say."

"You have not come to the most serious part of it yet," the doctor said.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," Frank said, more and more astonished.

"You hurt him, and very seriously."

"Yes, sir, I broke a man's nose in the fight, but I did it in self-defense."

"And you paid him ten pounds to prevent his coming to me," the doctor said.

"I acknowledge that I did so, but I don't see there was any harm in that."

"And where did you get the ten pounds from?" the doctor asked slowly.

"It was sent to me in an envelope," Frank replied.

"And who sent it to you?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Norris," the doctor said sternly, "you stole that note from my table."

Frank stepped back as if struck, the blood left his face, and he stood deadly pale.

"Stole it!" he repeated, in a low, wondering tone.

"Yes," the doctor repeated, "stole it from my table when I left the room."

"It is a lie!" Frank exclaimed, in a burst of passion; "it is a lie, sir, whoever said it."

Without replying to the outburst, the doctor touched a bell which stood on the table, and a junior waiting outside entered.

"Tell Mr. Wire and Mr. Richards I wish to speak to them."

Not a word was spoken in the library until the undermasters entered. A thousand thoughts passed rapidly through Frank's brain. He was bewildered, and almost stupefied by this sudden charge, and yet he felt how difficult it would be to clear himself from it. The undermaster and Frank's house-master entered.

"I have sent for you, gentlemen, on a most painful business," Dr. Litter said. "I mentioned to you, Mr. Wire, a week since, that I had lost a ten-pound note. I placed it on the table here, during the morning lesson, with my keys and pencil. I was called out of the room for half an hour. When school was over I put the things back in my pocket, but it was not until the afternoon that I missed the note. Thinking it over, I could not recall taking it up with the other things from the table; but of this I could not be positively certain. As I told you, I could not for a moment believe that any of the boys of my form could have taken it, and I could only suppose that I had dropped it between the school and my house.

"As it happened, I had only got the note the day before from my bankers, and had therefore no difficulty in obtaining the number. I gave notice at the Bank of England at once that the note had been lost, and requested them to obtain the name and address of the presenter, should it be brought in. It was presented yesterday by a man who, after being questioned, said he was a tailor, living in Bermondsey. As I was determined to follow the matter up, I saw the superintendent of police, and a policeman was sent across to him. The man said that he had been seriously injured by one of my boys at a low meeting held at some place in the New Cut, and that the ten pounds had been given him as compensation, he having threatened to come and complain to me.

"He was ignorant of the name of the boy, but he had received the note from a prize-fighter named Perkins, who keeps a low public-house down at Millbank. I sent a note to the man, requesting him to be good enough to call upon me this morning early. He did so. I told him that I had heard that he had paid to that man ten pounds as compensation for an injury which he had received from one of my boys, and I asked him from whom he had received it.

"He told me that nothing whatever would have induced him to tell; but as he knew the young gent would himself confess the instant the question was put, for he had told him he should do so did it come to my ears, there was no motive in his keeping silence, and it was Mr. Norris who had given it to him. On inquiry I find that the meeting in question was held between half-past nine and eleven; therefore, to have been present, Norris must have broken out of bounds and got into the boarding-house at night.

"This, in itself, would be a very grave offense, but it is as nothing by the side of the other. I am most reluctantly obliged to admit that I can come to but one conclusion: Norris, having broken bounds, and got into a disgraceful fray, was afraid that the matter would come to my ears. It was absolutely necessary for him to procure ten pounds to buy the silence of this man; my own very culpable carelessness, which I most deeply regret, left the note on the table, and the temptation was too much for him.

"I have questioned him how he got it. If he had said that he had picked it up in the yard, and, not knowing to whom it belonged, had very improperly, without making inquiry, devoted it to the purpose of silencing this man, I should have gladly believed him—for hitherto he has stood high in my estimation, and I should certainly have considered him incapable of an act of theft. But he tells me that it was sent to him in an envelope, by whom he does not know; and this absurd story is, to my mind, a clear proof that he must have stolen it from the table."

The two masters had at first looked at Frank with incredulous surprise, but as the narrative continued and the proofs appeared to accumulate, the expression changed, and they regarded him with horror, not unmixed with pity. For a minute there was silence, then Mr. Richards said:

"Strong as the proofs seem to be, sir, I can hardly believe in the possibility of Norris having behaved in this way. He has always been a particularly straightforward, honest, and honorable lad; there is not a boy in the house of whom I would so absolutely have disbelieved this tale. That he did send this note to the man there can, by his own confession, be no doubt, but I still cannot believe that he stole it. Come now, Norris, you have got into a terrible scrape, but don't make matters worse; tell us frankly the truth about it."

"I have told the truth," Frank said, in a low and unnatural voice. "I received the note in an envelope; here it is, sir, with, as you see, only the words 'From a friend.' I showed it when I had got it to Harris, Travers, James, and Barkley, and had not the remotest idea who it came from."

"To whom had you mentioned the need you had of ten pounds?" Mr. Wire asked.

"No one knew it except those four and Perkins, not a soul."

The three masters looked even more grave. The four boys were sent for one by one, and were asked if they had mentioned to any one the need which Frank had of ten pounds; but all declared they had spoken to no one on the subject.

"He showed you the envelope containing the note he received; what did you think about it?"

"It seemed a curious thing, sir," Harris said, "but none of us could account for it."

"I am accused," Frank said in a harsh voice, "of having stolen that note from Dr. Litter's table."

For the moment the four boys stood in silent astonishment.

"Nonsense, Frank," Harris burst out impetuously, "we know you better than that, old fellow; if an angel from heaven came down and told me you were a thief I would not believe him," and Harris seized his friend's hand and wrung it warmly, an example followed by his three companions.

Hitherto Frank's face had been hard and set, but he broke down now, and the tears streamed down his cheeks.

"You can go now," Dr. Litter said, and when the door closed upon them he continued: "I would give much, very much, Norris, to be able to believe in your innocence; but I cannot see a possibility of it; the evidence to my mind is overwhelming. I acquit you of any idea of deliberate theft. You were pressed and afraid of exposure, and the temptation offered by the note was too strong for you; you thought you saw a way of escape, and to account to your comrades for the possession of the money, you put it in an envelope and posted it, directed to yourself. Even now, if you will confess the truth, I will send you home privately, and avoid public expulsion and disgrace in consideration of the good character you have always hitherto borne; if not, I must at once lay the whole facts before your uncle and guardian, and to-morrow you will be publicly expelled."

"I have nothing to say, sir," Frank said quietly; "overwhelming as the proof appears against me, I have spoken the simple truth, and I swear that I never saw that note until I took it from the envelope."

"Go to your room, sir!" Dr. Litter said, with indignation, "this continued denial is almost worse than the offense."

Without a word Frank rose and left the library.

"This is indeed a shocking business," Mr. Wire said, as he followed Dr. Litter to the schoolroom.

"I cannot credit it," Mr. Richards put in; "I know him so well, that, absolutely conclusive as I allow the evidence to be, I still hesitate to believe him to be guilty."

After school was over Fred Barkley ran up to his cousin's room.

"My dear Frank," he exclaimed, "we are ordered not to communicate with you, but I could not help running in to tell you that every one believes you to be innocent."

"I hardly know whether I believe it myself," Frank said bitterly. "But you can do something for me, Fred; I have written a line to my uncle, will you post it for me at once?"

"Certainly," Fred replied; "but there is some one coming upstairs, so I must be off." He took the letter and was gone. It contained only a few words:

"My Dear Uncle: If you believe me innocent of this hideous charge, which I swear to you I am not guilty of, send me one line by hand when you get this. As long as I know that you have faith in me I can face it out."

The afternoon passed slowly to the prisoner. His uncle would get the letter between three and four, and he might have an answer half an hour afterward. Hour after hour passed, and, except the servant who brought up his tea, no one came near him. He reasoned to himself that his uncle might be out. At eight o'clock he heard a noise on the stairs; a number of feet approached his room, and then the door opened, and the whole of the boys in the boarding-house poured in.

"Norris, old fellow," Harris said, "we could stop away no longer, and in spite of orders we have come to see you. I beg to tell you in the name of the whole house, and I

may say the whole school, that not a boy here believes you to be guilty. How the note came into your hands we don't know and we don't care, but we are certain you did not take it."

"No! no!" was shouted in a chorus.

"So keep up your spirits, old fellow," Harris said, "it will come right sooner or later."

For some time Frank was unable to speak.

"Thank you all," he said at last, in a choking voice, "it is a consolation to me indeed to know that my old friends still believe in me; but, till my innocence is proved, I shall never be able to look the world in the face again."

"Come, boys, this will not do," a voice at the door said. "Harris, you elder boys ought to set a better example to the younger ones. I told you that the doctor's orders were positive that no one was to communicate with Norris."

"I can't help it, sir," Harris said; "we all felt we couldn't go to bed to-night without telling Norris that we knew he was innocent."

"Well, well, you must go downstairs now," not unkindly; "you must not stay a minute longer." There was a chorus of "Good-night, Norris!" "Good-night, old fellow!" "Keep up your pluck!" and various other encouraging expressions, and the party filed out of the door; Mr. Richards waited to see the last out, and then left Frank to his thoughts.

Not till ten o'clock did Frank give up all hope of hearing from his uncle, then he felt he had been condemned.

"All my school-fellows acquit me, and my uncle, who should know me better than any of them, condemns me. I wonder what Alice said. I don't believe she would believe me guilty if all the world told her."

At this moment the door opened quietly again, and Fred Barkley entered. Frank leaped to his feet to see if he was the bearer of a letter.

Fred shook his head in answer to the unasked question.

"I have slipped out of college to see you, Frank, and Richards has given me leave to come up. I have no news, I only came to see what you were going to do."

"You posted the letter to my uncle, Fred?" he asked.

"Yes, at once," he replied.

Frank was silent.

"What do you mean to do?" Fred went on.

"Do?" Frank asked, "what do you mean?"

"Why I suppose you don't mean to stop here until to-morrow?"

"I don't know," Frank replied, "I had not thought about it."

"I shouldn't, if I were in your place. It would be a fearful business; there hasn't been a boy expelled from Westminster for the last thirty years. I shouldn't stop for it if I were you."

"But what am I to do? where am I to go?" said Frank listlessly.

"Do?" said Fred, "why, go abroad to be sure. I should go out to California, or Australia, or somewhere, and in time this will be all forgotten. Perhaps it will turn out who sent that money. It is not as if facing it out would do any good, for you can prove nothing. Every one who know you believes you innocent."

"Uncle Harry doesn't," Frank said bitterly, "or he would have sent an answer to my letter."

"Ah! well, you know what he is," Fred said, "how passionate and hasty he is; but after a time he will think as we all do, never fear. Look here, I thought that you would want some money, so have been round to Ginger's and have sold all my books. The old beggar would not give me more than twenty pounds for them, though I have paid him more than double that, besides what I have bought from others. However, here are the twenty

pounds at your service; if you like to take them you are welcome."

Frank remained irresolute for a moment; then the thought of the terrible scene in the schoolroom, and of the tones in which the doctor would pronounce his expulsion, overcame him.

"I may as well go before as after, for I could not go home after that. Thank you, Fred, with all my heart; I will take your money and advice, and if I get a rich man I will pay you again. Are the fellows in bed?"

"Yes," Fred replied, "and Richards is in his study, so you can go down with me and slip out easy enough."

"Tell the others," Frank said, "that I went because I could not face the scene to-morrow, and that I hope some day to return and prove my innocence."

Without another word he opened his drawers, packed some clothes in a small portmanteau, put on his pea-jacket and the low cap he had worn in his unfortunate expedition to the New Cut; then he stole softly downstairs with Fred, and sallied out into the night air.

CHAPTER VI.

AT NEW ORLEANS.

FRANK NORRIS took his way eastward after leaving Westminster. He slept at a small hotel in the city, and at daybreak walked on to the docks. He was careless where he went, so that it was out of England; but he was determined, if possible, to work his passage, so as to leave the sum of money in his pocket untouched until he got to his destination. He went on board a number of ships and asked the captains if they wanted hands, but on his acknowledgment that he had never been at sea, none of them would ship him for the outward voyage only. At last he paused before a fine ship, the Mississippi; a printed placard on the wharf beside her mentioned that the well-known and favorite clipper would sail for New Orleans on that day. He walked on board and went up to the captain, who was talking to the first mate, while the latter was superintending the getting of cargo on board.

"Do you want a hand, sir?"

"Well, that depends," the captain said; "I am still two or three hands short, but they have promised to send me them this morning. Are you a sailor?"

"No, sir; but I can row and sail an open boat, and am ready to make myself useful. I want to work my passage out."

"You look an active young fellow," the captain said, "but I don't care about taking a landsman only for the voyage out; I should have to ship another hand in your place at New Orleans, and probably have to pay more

wages there than I could get one for here. Still, likely enough, they may send me down at the last moment two or three hands who know no more about it than you do, and may not be half so willing to learn as I should judge you to be. What do you say, Ephraim; shall we take him?"

"He looks a likely sort," the mate said.

"Very well then, it's agreed; you can take off your coat and fall to work at once; I will send down word to the office that I have shipped you." Frank stripped off his coat and waistcoat, and stowed them, with his portmanteau, out of the way, and then set to work with a will, the whiteness of his shirt, and his general appearance, exciting some jeering comments among the other men at work; but the activity and strength which he showed soon astonished and silenced them.

By one o'clock the last bale of cargo was stowed, and the hatches put on. The landsmen who had been employed went on shore, and Frank went forward to the forecastle, with the men, to dinner.

"Not the sort of grub you have been accustomed to, lad," one of the men said.

"I have eaten worse," Frank said carelessly, "and don't care if I never eat better. How long do you suppose we shall be before we get to New Orleans?"

"It all depends upon the wind," the sailor answered, "maybe a month, maybe three. Are you going to leave us there?"

"Yes," Frank said, "I am only working my passage out."

"It's a roughish place is New Orleans," the sailor said; "the sort of place where you want to have a knife or pistol ready at hand. Lor', I have seen some rum doings there; it's a word and a blow, I can tell ye."

"Ah! well," Frank laughed, "I suppose I shall do as well as the rest."

The voice of the mate was now heard calling to all hands to prepare to cast off. The men had hurried through their dinner, for they knew that the time allowed them would be short, and began casting off hawsers, coiling down ropes, and preparing for a start. The bell was ringing, and the friends of the passengers were saying good-by. The capstan was manned, and the vessel moved slowly away from the quay.

Five minutes later she was at the dock gates; these swung open, and the vessel slowly made her way through them, and was soon in the river.

As the men ran aloft to loosen the sails, Frank placed himself next to the sailor who had spoken to him at dinner, and followed him up the shrouds, and, imitating his actions, he was soon out on the yard hauling away with the others. When the sails were all set he returned below.

"Wall done, youngster," the mate said; "I reckon you are about as spry for a green hand as any I have come across; I had my eye on you, and you'll do. You go on like that, and you will make a first-rate hand afore long."

There was plenty of work to do as they went down the river. The sails had to be braced round as the wind took them on different sides in the winding reaches; the decks were sluiced down, to get rid of the first coat of dirt which they had acquired in the docks; ropes had to be coiled and tidied up, and the many articles lying loosely about the deck to be put in their places and lashed in readiness for sea work. The tide met them just as it was getting dark, and as the wind dropped, and was not sufficiently strong to carry the ship against it, the anchor was dropped a few miles below Gravesend.

The men were divided into two watches, but all were told that, with the exception of two stationed as an anchor watch, they could turn in till tide turned. Frank threw himself at once into the bunk which had been allotted to

him. He had not closed an eye the night before, and was worn out by emotion and fatigue, and scarcely had he lain down than he was sound asleep. He had been placed in the starboard watch, and slept till he was roughly shaken at four o'clock in the morning.

"Get up, mate, your watch is called."

Frank leaped out and made his way on deck. The vessel had been now three hours under weigh. She had passed the Nore, whose light shone brightly over the stern.

"The wind is freshening a bit," one of the men said, "we shall be out round the Foreland by dinner-time."

The voyage was an uneventful one; Frank escaped the first fight in which newcomers generally have to take part before they settle down in their new sphere. He was thoroughly good-tempered, and fully a match for any of his messmates in chaff, and he soon became a favorite in the fo'castle. He was always ready to take his share of the work, and was soon as much at home on the yards as the rest. The change and the newness of the life were very good for him; he was never alone, and had no time to think or brood over his troubles, and he was almost sorry when the end of the voyage approached.

"Not a lively-looking shore," the mate said to him as he leaned against the bulwark, looking at the low banks of the river a few miles below New Orleans. "No, even an American may confess that there ain't much beauty about this river. It's a great river, and a mighty useful one, but it ain't beautiful. Now, what are you thinking of doing when you get ashore?"

"I was thinking to begin by getting employment on board a boat of some sort. What I shall do afterward of course I do not know; but if I can earn my living on the water for a few months, till I have time to look round and see what is best to be done, I shall be well satisfied. I have got a few pounds, but I don't want to touch them;

they will come in useful if I want to move, or to buy a horse, or anything of that sort."

"You will do," the mate said. "You have shown yourself a right-down sharp fellow on board this ship, and I expect you will make your way whatever you try a hand at. I have taken a fancy to you, and should be glad to do you a good turn if I can. I have been in and out of this port for some years, and know Orleans pretty tidy, and I can tell you that there ain't a port on this side of the water or the other where a fellow can be put out of the way more promptly than here; there are parts of New Orleans which, I tell you, are a sort of hell on earth.

"There are places you couldn't go into without some one picking a quarrel with you afore you have been in there two minutes, and a quarrel here means knives out afore you have time to think. On the other hand, Orleans is a place where a steady industrious fellow, with his head screwed on right, has a good chance of getting on. The trade up the river is immense, and will be far greater than it is now; and there's pretty well a continent to the west, with openings of all sorts, land and cattle, houses and mining, and trade with Mexico. But I don't see as you can do better than to follow out your own idea.

"I know a score of men here who own boats trading up the river, and the first time I go ashore I will take you with me and put you in good hands. The rate of pay ain't high, for it's looked on as easy work; still, a few months at it will open your eyes and put you into the ways of the country, and, once at home, I tell you there's money to be made on the river, heaps of it, and when it's seen that you are steady, and willing, and 'cute, you will find plenty who will give you a helping hand. There's no greater place for loafers than New Orleans, and a chap who will really work will soon make his mark."

Frank warmly thanked the mate for his offer. The

moment the ship cast anchor off the town a crowd of negroes came on board and unloaded her, and the crew had comparatively little to do; the three or four passengers who had come out in her went on shore at once, but it was not until the third afternoon after her arrival that the mate was able to leave the ship.

"Now, lad," he said to Frank, "jump into the boat along with me, and I will see if I can't put you into the groove."

Keeping along the wharves for some distance, the mate presently entered a small wooden office, telling Frank to wait outside.

On entering he accosted the only occupant of the place, a man of some forty years of age, who was dressed entirely in white, and was sitting smoking a huge cigar, with his chair tilted back and his feet on the table.

"How are you, Ephraim?" he said, as the mate entered. "I saw your ship had arrived. Had a good voyage?"

"First-class," the mate replied; "not very fast, but quiet and comfortable," and he took a cigar from an open box on the table and lighted it. "I haven't come round for a talk with you now, I have only just come ashore for the first time; but I wanted to speak to you about a young chap as came out with us. He has worked his passage out, and is about the smartest young fellow I ever shipped, and has the makings of a first-class seaman in him, but he doesn't care about stopping at sea. He's of good family in the old country, as one can easily see. I expect he has got into some scrape, and has had to make a bolt of it; however, that's no business of mine. He's as strong as a horse, and as active as a squirrel; he can handle an oar and sail a boat. I didn't like the thought of his landing here and getting into bad hands, so I thought I would come straight to you. He said what he wanted to do was to work on the river, for a few months at any rate, until he

got to know the place. Now I know you have a dozen tugs and a score of barges, and I thought you might set him on at once. He would make a good second hand on one of your large boats. If it's but to oblige me, I wish you would put him on board one with a sober, steady chap of a decent kind; as soon as he gets to know the work and the river, I will guarantee that he will be fit to take charge himself."

"That's easy enough done, Ephraim," the trader replied, "all except finding the sober and steady decent man to put him under. However, I will do my best. Have you got him here?"

"Yes, he is outside," Ephraim said; and rising, he went to the door and called Frank in. "This is the hand I was speaking to you about, Mr. Willcox."

"Well, young man," the trader said, "I hear you want a berth on board a tug or flat. Which would you rather have?"

"I would prefer to be on a flat, at any rate for a time, sir," Frank said; "I am a pretty good hand at sailing or rowing, but I don't know anything about steamboats."

"There's not much to learn in that," the trader said; "the work is simply to keep the decks clean, to help to load and unload at each landing-place, and to pole off in shallows. However, I will put you on board a flat. The wages to begin with will be twenty dollars a month and your keep, if that will suit you."

"That will do, sir, very well," Frank said. "When shall I come to work?"

"If you come here this time to-morrow you can go aboard at once. One of the flats will go up the first thing in the morning."

"Thank you, sir, I will be here. I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. Alderson, for your kind recommendation of me."

"I am glad to have put you into a berth," the mate said. "Now I should recommend you to get on board again soon."

Frank strolled about the wharves for an hour or two, and then went on board. Before going on shore the following day, the captain gave him a certificate, saying that he had sailed in the Mississippi, and was a good, willing, and reliable hand.

"You may not intend to go to sea again, but if you should, this will get you a better berth than if you had applied as a landsman. I am very pleased with your conduct on board the ship, and I am only sorry you are leaving us. I think it's a pity you don't stick to it, for it is clear that you are well educated, and would be able to pass as a mate as soon as you had been the requisite time at sea. However, you can fall back on that if you don't get on as well as you expect on shore."

The mate said good-by to him warmly.

"Your employer is one of the very best in the place," said he. "You must not suppose he is in a small way because you see him in that little office; he is one of the largest tug and flat owners in New Orleans. He keeps his eye on his men, and will push you forward if he sees you deserve it. He has the name of having the best of captains on the river, and of being one of the best and most liberal of employers. But you must not expect much in flat life, you will find the men rough as well as the work."

"I shan't mind that," Frank said cheerfully; "our own bargemen on the Thames are not the most polished of men."

"And, lad," the mate added, "I should advise you to hand over any money you may have with you to Mr. Willcox; the less money you have in your pockets the better. You have no occasion for it on the river, and there are loafers hanging about at every landing who would think nothing of knocking a man on the head if they thought he had got fifty dollars in his pocket."

Frank promised to take his advice, and, with a hearty farewell to the mate, and a cordial one to his late shipmates, he put his portmanteau in the boat and was rowed ashore.

"Oh, here you are," Mr. Willcox said, as he entered; "just give a call to that man you see outside."

Before doing so, Frank handed over his twenty sovereigns to the trader, asking him to keep them for him, and then went to the door. On a log close by a tall, gaunt man was sitting smoking a short pipe. Frank asked him to step in.

"Hiram," the trader said, "this is the young Britisher who is going as your second hand. I have good accounts of him as a sailor, so you won't have to teach him that part of the business. Of course he is new to the river and its ways."

"I will put him through," the man said, "and will teach him as much as I knows myself if he cares to learn."

"There is no one knows the river better, Hiram; and, as you know, I would have given you the command of a steamer long ago if you would have taken it."

"No, sir," the man said emphatically, "not for Hiram Little. I have been on board a flat all my days, and am not going to be hurried along in one of them puffing things. They have their uses, I am ready enough to allow, when the current is swift and the wind light; I am glad enough of a cast now and then, but to be always in a bustle and flurry is more than I could stand. Come along, youngster, with your sack; the boat is a quarter of a mile down."

Taking up his portmanteau, Frank followed his conductor, who with long strides led the way along the wharf. Not a word was spoken till they reached the side of the boat. This was not a flat such as now are in general use, but a large boat some forty feet in length by fourteen wide,

almost flat-bottomed, and capable of carrying a cargo of eight or ten tons of goods. In the stern was a little cabin some eight feet long for the captain and his mate. In front was a similar structure for the four negroes who formed the crew.

She carried one mast, with a large lug-sail. She had four sweeps, but these were seldom used. When the wind was fair she ran before it, when it was foul the mast was lowered; if it fell calm when they were coming down the stream they drifted with it, if when going up, they either anchored or poled her along in the back waters close inshore, or made their way up the numerous channels where the stream flowed sluggishly, or tied on behind a tug if one happened to come along.

Their principal work was to carry up supplies to the various plantations along the banks, to trade with the villages, and to bring down produce to New Orleans; for the stopping places of the steamers were at wide distances apart, and the number of steamers themselves very small in comparison with those now afloat on the great river. At times they made longer journeys, going up as far as St. Louis; but in that case they were generally, as Frank afterward learned, towed up the whole distance.

"Hi! Pete, shove that plank ashore," Hiram shouted, and a negro at once showed his head above a scuttle in the bow of the boat, and then emerging, pushed a plank across the fifteen feet of water which intervened between the flat and the wharf.

"That's your first lesson, young man," Hiram said. "Never on no account lay your craft close alongside; thar's river thieves at these landings as would empty half the cargo if you left the boat for ten minutes, if they could step aboard, and these niggers are always asleep the minute after you take your eyes off them. So, whether you have got anything aboard or not, stick to the rule and moor her

a bit off the wharf. It's only the trouble of dropping the grapnel over on the outside in addition to the hawser ashore, and then there's never no trouble when you get back and have to report as how you have lost some of the bales. It ain't as how we carry up many things as would pay for taking; soft goods for the stores up the river mostly goes by steamer, but them as ain't hurried, and likes to keep their dollars in their pockets, has their goods up by flats. I have got ten hogsheads of sugar, twenty-four crates of hardware, some barrels of molasses, and forty casks of spirits on board, eighty kegs of nails and a ton or two of rice and flour. We reckon to go up light, and I don't care to have the flat more nor half-full, for when the river's low and the wind light the less we have on board the better. Now, Pete, let's have tea as soon as may be."

By this time they had entered the cabin at the stern of the boat. It was only about five feet high, but was large and roomy, and Frank saw with pleasure that it was neat and clean, and was an abode infinitely preferable to the forecastle of the Mississippi.

"Now, lad, that's your side, and this is mine; that's your bunk. I am given to tidy ways, having all my life lived in small places, and I hope as you will fall into my ways; I keeps the cabin tidy myself, and Pete never comes aft here except to bring the food and take it away again; I can't a-bear niggers messing about a place. Victuals of all sorts is provided. You can do as you like about liquor. I keeps a keg of rum on board, and I likes my glass at night; if you likes to join me at that you can pay for half the keg, it has not been broached yet. If you want to drink more nor two glasses a night, ye had best get in yer own stock; if ye don't want to touch it at all, just leave it."

Frank said he liked a glass of grog at night, and should be glad to join in the cask, and that he would do his best to keep his side of the cabin as tidy as the other. In a

few minutes the negro brought in the meal, which consisted of a steak fried with onions, followed by a large bowl of oatmeal, with a jug of molasses, and the whole was washed down with tea.

"The stream does not seem to run very rapidly," Frank said, as he and his companion, having lit their pipes, sat down on the deck above.

"It varies," Hiram replied; "sometimes it's sluggish, as you see it here, sometimes it runs like a mill-stream. The art of sailing here is to know the river; for what with its back currents and its eddies, its channels behind islands and its sandbanks, one who knows it can manage to make his way up, while one who didn't know would be drifting backward instead of getting forward. That's what you have got to learn. Fortunately the wind generally blows up the stream; when it don't it's a case of down anchor. There are places where one can hardly get along unless the wind happens to be unusually strong, and there I generally get a tow. The boss has got about twenty steamers on the river, so we don't generally have to wait many hours before one comes along. The tugs is gradually doing away with sailing boats, and in time there won't be many of our kind of craft left; but they are useful, you see, for small places where the steamers don't stop, and for the rivers which run into the Mississippi."

The next morning at daybreak the sail was hoisted, the hawsers thrown off from the shore, and the flat made her way up the river. Frank was surprised to see how fast she sailed, although the wind was but light. The work was easy, for the wind was steady and they seldom sailed at night, the wind generally dropping at sundown. They touched at numerous little settlements, and gradually got rid of the cargo with which they had started.

Sometimes they left the main river and sailed for many miles by narrow channels, where the current, for the most

part, was almost imperceptible. They were more than a month from the time they started before they reached the spot at which they were to take in the cargo for their return voyage. The flat was then loaded up with grain, which was put in in bulk and covered with tarpaulin; the boat was now laden down nearly to the water's edge.

The downward voyage differed widely from that up the river; the sail was now seldom used, and instead of skirting the shores they kept in mid-channel, from time to time directing the boat's course by the use of the sweeps. The moon was nearly full when they started, and they continued their voyage by night as well as day. Hiram and Frank took it by turns to be on watch; but the former was seldom down below, except on the rare occasions when the river was free from shoals.

Frank had by this time learned by the ripples on the water to detect the shallows, and could direct the course without assistance; but as soon as the splash of oars was heard on the water, Hiram was sure to appear on deck, however short the time since he had retired to rest.

"You are seeing the river at its best," he was saying one day. "It is about half-full now; when the water's low, the channel where we can pass loaded is often only fifty yards wide, with the water running through it like a sluice. When the water is in flood there is no fear of shoals, but you have got to look about, for it is full of floating trees and logs; when these get stuck we call them snags, and if you were to run on one of them the chances are it would knock a hole as big as a cask in her bottom, and down you would go in two or three minutes."

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

"WE ARE going to have a change of weather, I reckon," Hiram said one afternoon as they were drifting down the stream during their second voyage. "You have been lucky since we started, but we are going to have a change at last; and I can tell you when it blows here it's a caution. They have been having a lot of rain up the country, for the river has been rising regular for the last ten days. We had best make fast for the night, and the sooner we does it the better, for the wind is getting up fast and the rain is just a-going to begin."

In a quarter of an hour the boat was moored to a great tree at the lower end of an island.

"We shall be snug here," he said, "and out of the way of the drift that will be coming down presently. You can turn in and take a long spell of sleep to-night, for sometimes those storms last for days when they come on this time of year, and you will see there will be a sea on that the boat could hardly live in. I wish we had stopped two hours ago; there was a creek where we could have run her in and been snug all through it, but I didn't think it was coming up so quick, and it's too far on to the next place to risk it; however, I expect we shall do very well here."

In another half-hour the gale burst upon them furiously, and Frank congratulated himself that the boat was snugly moored. The thick muddy water of the river was speedily lashed into angry waves; the rain came down in torrents, and although the left-hand bank was but a quarter of a

mile distant it was soon lost to view. Frank was glad to leave the deck and crawl into the little cabin, and sit down to a hot meal which the negro cook had prepared.

"Better here than outside, my lad," Hiram said. "I can go as wet as any man if need be, but I like to keep a dry jacket when I can. The wind is just howling outside. I reckon this is going to be a bigger storm nor ordinary, and I have seen some biggish storms on the Mississippi too. I have had some narrer escapes of it, I can tell you, special in the days before there was nary a tug on the river, and we had to row or pole all the way up; besides there ain't so many trees brought down as there used to be in a flood, seeing as the country is getting more and more cleared every day.

"I reckon the time will come when you will be able to go up either the Mississippi or Missouri to the upper waters without seeing a tree drifting down, and when there won't be a snag in their beds. I mind the time when the snags were ten times worse than they is now. I mind once we ran on one of the darned things in pretty nigh as wild a night as this is going to be. I had six hands along with me, and we wanted to get down, 'cause we knew the old man would have a cargo ready for us, and we wanted a run of a day or two on shore at Orleans before we started up again, so we held on. The wind was higher than we reckoned on, and we was just saying we should have done better to tie up, when there was a crash. I thought at first that she would have gone over with the shock, but she didn't—not that it would have made much odds, for there was a snag through her bottom, and the water pouring in like a sluice. It was darkish, but we could make out there was some trees a boat's-length or two ahead which had been caught as they rolled down by another snag, and hung there. The boat didn't float more than a minute after she struck, and then we were all in the river, those who couldn't swim gripping

hold of the oars and poles; half a minute and we were all clinging to the boughs, and hoisting ourselves as well as might be clear of the water.

"I tell you, lad, that was a night. It wasn't that we was drenched to the skin with the rain pouring down, and the wind cutting through us—that kind of thing comes natural to a boatman—but it was the oncertainty of the thing. The trees moved and swayed with the waves and current; the flood we knew was rising still, and any moment they might break away from the snag and go whirling along, over and over, down the river. Even if they didn't break away of theirselves, another tree might drive down on us, and if it did, the chances was strong as the hull affair would break loose.

"All that night and all next day we hung on, and then the wind went down a bit, and a nigger who had made us out from the shore came off in a dug-out and took us ashore in two trips. That war a close shave. The wind was northerly and bitter cold, and I don't believe as we could have hung on another night more nor that. Next morning, when we turned out from the nigger's hut to have a look round, there wasn't no sign of them thar trees, they had just gone down the river in the night. Yes, I have had a good many narrow shaves of it, but I do think as that war the narrowest."

"Well, I am heartily glad," Frank said, "that we are tied safely up, out of the way of floating trees, snags, or anything of the kind. I always like hearing the wind when I am snug, and I shall sleep sound knowing that I am not going to hear your shout of 'Watch on deck' in my ear."

In spite of the howling of the gale Frank slept soundly. But he could scarcely believe that it was broad daylight when he awoke; the light was dim and leaden, and when he went out from the cabin he was startled at the aspect

of the river. The waves had risen until it resembled an angry sea, the yellow masses of water being tipped with foam; the clouds hung so low that they almost touched the top of the trees; the rain was still falling, and the drops almost hurt from the violence with which they were driven by the wind. The river had risen considerably during the night, and the lower end of the island was already submerged; boughs of trees and driftwood were hurrying along with the stream, and more than one great tree passed, now lifting an arm high in the air, now almost hidden in the waves, as it turned over and over in its rapid course. Frank felt glad indeed that the boat lay in comparatively sheltered waters, though even here the swell caused her at times to roll violently.

"What do you think of it, lad?" Hiram, who had risen some time before Frank, asked.

"It is a wonderfully wild scene," Frank said enthusiastically, "a grand scene! I should not have had an idea that such a sea could have got up on any river. Look at that great tree rolling down, it looks as if it was wrestling for life."

"The wrestle is over, lad, there ain't no more life for that tree; it will just drift along till it either catches on a sandbank and settles down as a snag, or it will drift down to the mouth of the Mississippi, and maybe help to choke up some of the shallow channels, or it may chance to strike the deep channel, and go away right out into the Gulf of Florida, and then the barnacles will get hold of it, and it will drift and drift till at last it will get heavier than the water, and then down it will go to the bottom and lie there till there ain't no more left of it. No, lad, there ain't no more life for that tree."

"Maybe it will wash ashore near the city, or some plantation," Frank said, "and be hauled up and cut into timber, or perhaps into firewood. After all, the useful life of a tree begins with its fall."

"Right you are, lad; yes, that might happen, and I am glad you put it in my mind, for somehow I have always had a sorter pity for a tree when I see it sweeping down in a flood like this. Somehow it's like looking at a drowned man; but, as you say, there's a chance of its getting through it and coming to be of use after all, and what can a tree wish better than that? But we had best be hauling the boat up to the tree and shifting the rope up the trunk a bit; it's just level with the water now, and was nigh eight feet above when we tied it yesterday. I tell you if this goes on there will be some big floods, for it will try the levees, and if they go there ain't no saying what damage may be done in the plantations."

All day the wind blew with unabated fury, and when evening came on Frank thought that it was increasing rather than diminishing in force.

"Let's have a glass of grog and tumble in, my lad," Hiram said, "it gives one the dismals to listen to the wind." They had scarcely wrapped themselves in their blankets when the boat swayed as if struck by an even stronger blast than usual; then there was a sudden crash, which rose even above the howling of the gale.

"What's that?" Frank exclaimed, sitting up.

"It's the tree," Hiram began; but while the words were in his mouth there was a shock and a crash, the roof of the little cabin was stove in, and the boat heeled over until they thought it was going to capsize. Frank was thrown on to the floor with the violence of the shock, but speedily gained his feet.

"What has happened?" he exclaimed.

"The tree has gone," Hiram said; "I have been looking at it all the afternoon, but I didn't want to scare you by telling you as I thought it might go. It's lucky it didn't fall directly on us, or it would have knocked the boat into pieces. The door is jammed. Get hold of that hatchet,

lad, and make a shift to get your head out to look round and see what we are doing. Do you hear them niggers holloaing like so many tom-cats? What good do they suppose that will do?"

"I can't see anything," Frank said when he looked out; "it's pitch dark. I will make this hole a bit bigger, and then I will take the lantern and crawl forward and see what has become of the blacks. I am afraid the tree has stove the boat in; look at the water coming up through the float-boards."

"Ay, I expect she is smashed somewhere; it could hardly be otherwise; I reckon this is going to be about as bad a job as the one I was telling you about. Here, lad, put this bottle of rum into your jacket and this loaf of bread; I will take this here chunk of cold beef; like enough we may want 'em afore we are done."

When Frank had enlarged the hole sufficiently to allow his body to pass through, he put the lantern through and then crawled out. He was in a tangle of branches and leaves. The head-rope was a long one; the tree had fallen directly toward them, and the boat was, as far as Frank could see, wedged in between the branches, which forked some forty feet above the roots; a cross branch had stove in the cabin top, and another rested across the scuttle of the cabin used by the negroes.

"Hand me the axe, sharp, Hiram," he said; "the niggers can't get out, and our bow isn't a foot out of water."

Hiram handed up the axe, seized another, and with a great effort squeezed himself through the hole and joined Frank in the fore-part of the boat, which was waist-deep in water.

"Never mind the branch, lad, that will take too long to cut through, and another two or three minutes will do their business; here, rip, off two or three of those planks, that will be the quickest way."

Although impeded in their work by the network of boughs, they speedily got off two or three planks and hauled up the frightened negroes. It was but just in time, for there were but a few inches between the water and the top of the low cabin.

"Shut your mouths and drop that howling," Hiram said, "and grip hold of the tree; the boat will sink under our feet in another minute. Stick to your lantern, lad, a light is a comfort anyhow; I'll fetch another from the cabin, and some candles; I know just where they are and can feel them in the water."

In a minute he rejoined Frank, who was sitting astride of one of the branches.

"That's a bit of luck," he said; "the candles are dry. There ain't more than two feet of water in her aft."

Three or four minutes passed, and the boat still lay beneath their feet, sinking, apparently, no lower. "I will look round again," Hiram said; "it seems to me as she has got jammed, and won't go any lower."

Examining the boat, he found that it was so; she was so completely wedged among the branches that she could sink no lower.

"It's all right," he said joyously. "Jump down, all of you, and lend a hand and unreeve the halliards from the mast and bind her as tight as you can to the branches; pass the ropes under the thwarts. Make haste before she shakes herself free." For the tree, now well clear of the shelter of the land, was swaying heavily.

The work was soon done, and the boat securely fastened to the tree.

"How is it the tree lies steady without rolling over and over, Hiram?" Frank asked, after they paused on the completion of the work.

"I reckon it's the boat as keeps it steady, lad. As long as she lies here she is no weight, but she would be a big

weight to lift out of water, and I reckon she keeps the whole affair steady. It couldn't be better if we had planned it. All these boughs break the force of the waves, and keep off a good bit of the wind too; we ain't going to do badly after all.

"Pete, get me that half-bottle of rum from my locker and a tin mug. That is right. Now here is a good strong tot each for you to make your faces black again; you were white with fear when we got you out of that cabin, and I don't blame you; I should have been in just as bad a fright myself if I had been there, though I shouldn't have made such a noise over it. Still, one can't expect men of one color to have the same ways as those of another, and I am bound to say that if the boat had gone down your boss would have lost four good pieces of property. Feel more comfortable—eh?"

The negroes grinned assent. Easily cast down, their spirits were as easily raised, and seeing that the white men appeared to consider that there was no urgent danger, they soon plucked up their courage.

"I think," Frank said, "the best thing will be to manage to get the cabin door open. We can put a tarpaulin over the hole in the roof, and we shall then have a shelter we can go into; the water is not over the lockers, but I shouldn't like to go in until we get the door open. If this tree did take it into its head to turn round, it would be awkward if there were two or three of us in there, with only that hole to scramble through."

"You are about right, lad; it will be a sight more comfortable than sitting here, for what with the rain and the splashing up of this broken water one might as well be under a pump."

The axes were called into requisition again, for the door was jammed too firmly to be moved.

"Chop it up, and shove the pieces under the tarpaulin,

Sam; they will get a bit drier there, and we may want them for a fire presently; there is no saying how long we may be in this here floating forest. That's right. Now, hang one of them lanterns up in the cabin. That's not so bad. Now, lad, our clothes-bags are all right on these hooks. I am just going to rig myself up in a dry shirt and jacket, and advise you to do the same; we may as well have the upper half dry if we must be wet below."

Frank was glad to follow Hiram's example, and a dry flannel shirt made him feel thoroughly warm and comfortable. He handed a shirt to each of the negroes, and the whole party, clustered in the little cabin, were soon comparatively warm and cheerful, in spite of the water, which came up to their knees, and when the boat rose on a wave, swashed up over the locker on which they were sitting.

A supply of dry tobacco and some pipes were produced by Hiram, and the little cabin was soon thick with smoke.

"Taking it altogether," Hiram said," I regard this as about the queerest sarcumstance that ever happened to me; it was just a thousand to one that tree would have smashed us up and sunk us then and thar. It was another thousand to one that when we were staved in we shouldn't have got fixed so that the boat couldn't sink; if any one had told it me as a yarn I should not have believed it."

"It has indeed been a wonderful escape," Frank said, "and I think now that we should be ungrateful indeed if every one of us did not fervently thank God for having preserved us."

"Right you are, lad; praying ain't much in my way—not regular praying; but we men as lives a life like this, and knows that at any moment a snag may go through the boat's bottom, thinks of these things at times, and knows that our lives are in God's hands. It ain't in nature to go up and down this broad river, special at night, when

the stars are shining overhead, and the dark woods are as quiet as death, and there ain't no sound to be heard but the lap of the water against the bow for a man not to have serious thoughts. It ain't our way to talk about it. I think we try to do our duty by our employers, and if a mate is laid up, he need never fear getting on a shoal for want of a helping hand; and when our time comes, I fancy as there ain't many of us as is afeared of death, or feels very bad about the account they say we have got to render arterward. It's different with the niggers; it's their way to be singing hymns and having prayer-meetings, and such like. There is some as is agin this, and says it gives 'em notions, and sets them agin their masters; but I don't see it; it pleases 'em, and it hurts no one; it's just the difference of ways. I expect it comes to the same in the end; leastways, I have seen many a wreck in this here river, when whites and blacks have been a-looking death in the face together, and sartin the white man, even if he has been a hard man, ain't no more afraid to die than the black, generally just the contrary. That's my notion of things."

Frank nodded, and for a time there was silence in the cabin.

"How long are we likely to be in this fix?" Frank asked presently.

"Thar ain't no saying; supposing we don't bring up agin a snag—which the Lord forbid, or like, enough, the tree would shift its position, and we should find ourselves bottom upward if we did—we may drift on for days and days. Still, we shall be safe to make ourselves seen as soon as the weather clears, and there are boats out again; we have only got to light a fire of wet wood to call their attention. I don't expect this here gale will last much longer; after another day it ought to begin to blow itself out. As long as nothing happens to this tree, and the

boat keeps fast where it is, there ain't nothing to make ourselves uncomfortable about. We'd best have a look at them lashings; I tell you, there is a tidy strain on them."

Examining the ropes carefully, they found some of them were already chafed, and, dragging out a piece of wet canvas from the lockers, they cut it into strips and lashed it round the ropes at the points where they were chafing. The strain was indeed very heavy, for the tree and the waterlogged boat rose but little with the waves, and the bow was submerged deeply every time a wave passed them, the gunwale being at no time more than a few inches out of water. Additional lashings were put on, and then Hiram and Frank returned to the cabin, and the latter dozed away the hours till morning, as did the negroes, Hiram remaining wide awake and watchful, and going out from time to time to look at the lashings. As soon as day broke Frank roused himself and went out; Hiram was just descending from one of the boughs.

"I have had a look round," he said; "I don't think it's blowing quite so hard, but thar ain't much change yet. It ain't not to say a cheerful kind of lookout."

Frank climbed up to take a view for himself, but he was glad to return very quickly to the shelter of the cabin. Overhead was a canopy of low gray cloud; around, a curtain of driving rain; below, a chaos of white-headed waves. The day passed slowly, and with little change. Sam found in the fore-part of the boat the iron plate on which he built his fire. They fixed this on the roof of the cabin, fastened a tarpaulin across the boughs so as to shelter it from the rain and drift, and then, with some difficulty, managed to make a fire. Some hot coffee was first prepared, and a frying-pan was then put on and filled with slices of pork. The flour was wet, but Sam made some flat cakes of the wet dough, and placed them in the fat to fry when the pork was done.

"Not a bad meal that," Hiram said, when he had finished, "for a floating forest."

The negroes had now completely recovered from the effects of their fright and wetting, and their spirits, as usual, found vent in merry choruses.

"Just like children, ain't they?" Hiram said, as he and Frank re-entered the cabin, while the negroes continued to feast overhead, "crying one moment and laughing the next. But I have known some good uns among them too, as good mates to work with as a man could want, and as good grit as a white man." Another meal, later in the afternoon, alone broke the monotony of the day. The aspect of the weather was unchanged at nightfall, but Hiram asserted that the wind had certainly gone down, and that in the morning there would probably be a break in the weather. They smoked for some time, and then the negroes dozed off, with their chins on their chests; and Frank was about to make an effort to do the same, when Hiram, who had been going in and out several times, said suddenly, "I reckon we are out of the main stream; don't you feel the difference?"

Now that his attention was called to it, Frank wondered that he had not noticed it before. The waves were no longer washing over the fore-part of the boat, and the sluggish efforts of the tree and boat to rise and fall with the water had ceased. He was still more struck, when he went outside, by the comparative silence. The wind still whistled overhead and swayed the branches, but the hiss and rustle of the water had ceased.

"We are out of the main stream, that's sartin," Hiram said, "though where we are is more nor I can tell till we get daylight."

Frank took the lantern and climbed up the bough which served as a lookout. It was pitch dark outside, and the surface of the water was no longer broken by white heads.

"Yes, we are certainly out of the main river, Hiram,

and in behind some big islands. Where do you think it could be?"

"I reckon, lad, we are somewhere down near the mouth of the Arkansas. The stream has been running mighty strong for the last two days, and the wind, catching all these branches, must have helped us along a good bit. I reckon we can't be far away from the Arkansas. It's a bad stroke of luck drifting in here, we may expect to get hung up somewhere, and we shall be in a nice fix then, out of sight of boats going up and down, and with miles and miles of swamp stretching back from the shore. However, it will be time to think of that to-morrow. There ain't nothing for us to do; just lend us a hand, and we will get this iron plate off the roof. The tarpaulin keeps off the rain, and I will fetch a couple of blankets, and we can stretch ourselves out here; I despise going to sleep sitting up."

Frank was sound asleep in a few minutes. He had a confused notion of feeling a slight jerking motion, and of hearing Hiram say, "There, she is anchored;" but he did not suffer this to rouse him, and, dropping off, slept soundly till morning. At the first stir Hiram made he was awake.

"We have had a goodish spell of sleep, I reckon, lad, and I feel all the better for having had my legs stretched out straight."

"So do I, ever so much; the wind seems to have gone quite down, and it has stopped raining."

"We shall have the sun up soon."

Frank was soon up in the lookout.

"I can see trees on both sides of us, but I can make out nothing more than that; there's a mist hanging over them, though it's clear enough on the water. We are not moving."

"I could have told you that," Hiram said, "didn't we get fast on something before we went to sleep last night?"

"Oh, I forgot about that; I was just off when you spoke and didn't quite take it in. We are quite out of the current; the water is moving very sluggishly past us."

"So much the worse, lad; that's just what I fancied. We have got blown out of the stream, and got in behind some of the islands, and are perhaps at the mouth of one of the loops where there ain't no stream to speak of; useful enough they are when you are making your way upstream, but no-account places to get stuck in. Now you darkeys below there, wake up, and let's have some food; you will soon have the sun up to warm you and dry your clothes a bit. By the time we have had our breakfast," he went on to Frank, "the mist will have lifted, and we shall have some chance of seeing where we have been cast away, and can talk over what's the best thing to be done in this here business."

The iron plate was replaced on the cabin, the fire was lit, and coffee and fried bacon were soon ready. The first sparkle of the sun through the leaves brought a shout of delight from the negroes, and directly the meal was over they cut away some of the small branches and let the sun stream in on to the roof of the cabin.

"That's enough, boys," Hiram said; "by midday we shall be glad of the shade. Now, let you and I light our pipes, lad, and take a survey, and then talk this job over."

On looking round, they found that the passage, or creek, in which they were was some eighty yards wide; ahead it seemed to narrow; behind them, a bend shut out the view a quarter of a mile away.

"That's just what I expected. You see we have drove in here, and there's been just current enough to drift us on till the lower branches touched the bottom or caught in a snag; the water ain't flowing half a mile an hour now, and I reckon when the water begins to drop, which will be in a

few days, if it holds fine, there won't be no current to speak of."

"But we are not going to stay here a few days, are we, Hiram?"

"Well, lad, I ain't no particular wish to stay here no time at all, if you will just pint out the way for us to be moving on."

"Well, we could all swim ashore," Frank said; "the distance is nothing, and all the blacks swim."

"And how fur do you reckon the shore to be, lad?"

"About forty yards," Frank said.

"I reckon it to be miles, lad—twenty, perhaps, or forty for aught I know." Frank looked at his companion in surprise.

"Yes, that is about it, lad. Don't you see them trees are all growing out by the water, and what looks to you like low bush is just the top of the underwood. The river, I reckon, must have riz twenty feet, and all this low land is under water. As I told you, we are near the mouth of the Arkansas, and for miles and miles the country ain't much better than a swamp at the best of times. You can swim to them trees, and roost up in the branches, if the fancy takes yer, and maybe we may decide that's the best thing to do, when we have talked it over; but as to getting to land, you may put that notion out of your head altogether. I told you, lad, last night, I didn't like the lookout, and I don't like it a bit better this morning, except that I look to be dry and comfortable in another hour. What's to come after that I don't quite see."

Frank was silent. The prospect, now that he understood it, was unpleasant indeed. There they were with a disabled and waterlogged boat, in the middle of a district submerged for many miles, and surrounded beyond that by fever-stricken swamps, while the prospect of any craft happening to come along was remote indeed. For some minutes he smoked his pipe in silence.

"You consider it impossible for us to make our escape through the wood."

"Just unpossible, lad. We might make our way from tree to tree, like a party of monkeys, but we should get to creeks where we couldn't cross; we should be half our time swimming. We could take no food to speak of with us; we should get lost in the swamps, if ever we got through the forest. No, lad; my present idea is it is unpossible, though, if we detarmines at last there ain't nothing else for us to do but to try for it, Hiram Little ain't the man to die without making a hard fight for his life; but I tell you, lad, I looks on it as unpossible. You have been on these banks with me, and you know how thick the trees and bushes grow, so that a snake could hardly make his way through them. When the river is at her level the ground ain't about a foot or two out of water, and when the river falls—and it mayn't fall to its level for weeks—it will just be a swamp of mud."

"Well, in that case," Frank said, "it seems to me that our only chance is to repair the boat."

"That's just my idea, young fellow. There is a biggish hole on each side, the ribs are smashed in, and a lot of damage is done, but we could make a shift to mend it if we could get her ashore; but there ain't no shore to get her to, that's the mischief of it; besides, here we are stuck, and if we were to cut away the tree to loose her she would go straight to the bottom."

"Yes, we mustn't cut her loose before we are alongside something. My idea is that if we first of all cut off all the boughs that are above us, close to the trunk, that will make a good deal of difference in the weight, and we should float higher. Then, with hatchet and saw, we must get rid of those below, taking a rope first to the trees and hauling her closer and closer alongside them as we get rid of the weight, till at last there is only the trunk and these

two great arms that have nipped her. I think that way we might get alongside the trees."

"I reckon we might, lad. Yes, I don't see much difficulty about that. And what shall we do when we get there?"

"I should get under a big tree, like that one over there, with that great arm stretching over the stream. We've got plenty of ropes, and I should fasten them from her bow and stern, and from her thwarts, tight to that arm overhead. When I got her fixed, I would chop away one of these arms that grip her, and let her float free. We have no tackle that would be of any use in hoisting her, but if we take the plug out of her bottom, she will empty as the river sinks, and hang there. Once she is in the air there will be no difficulty in patching her up."

"That's a capital idee, young fellow," Hiram exclaimed, giving Frank a mighty pat on the shoulder. "I do believe it is to be done that way. I tell you, I did not see my way out of this fix nohow, but you have hit upon it, by gosh! Here, you darkies, get them axes and saws out of the cabin, and clear away this forest."

An hour's work cleared away all the wood above water.

The sun was by this time well above the trees; the negroes woke up to life and cheerfulness in its warmth, and worked vigorously.

"Before we do anything more," Frank said, "I will swim with a light line to that tree, and then haul the tow-rope after me, and make it fast to it; it is possible that when we cut away some of the other boughs the whole affair may turn over and sink, but if the tow-rope is fast we may be able to drag it alongside."

When the rope was attached to the tree, they proceeded with their work. The two great arms were chopped through just beyond the point at which the boat was wedged, thus getting rid of the whole of the upper part of the tree.

"She's free now," Hiram said. "Stand in the middle of the boat, you boys; I can feel that a very little would sway her over now."

The bow sank some inches, and fully half the boat was submerged.

"Now, you and I will get out at this end of the trunk, lad, and tow her in, stern foremost."

They got within ten yards of the tree before she again stuck, and it took them some hours' work to cut away the branch which projected under water; but at last this was done and the boat was placed in position under the arm of the great tree they had pitched upon, and a number of ropes fastened firmly to the arm.

"Now we will have some dinner," Hiram said; "and while Pete is cooking it we will get ashore with the saw and cut the heads off of some these small trees, and fasten them to this trunk, so as to make a sort of raft that we can put all these tubs on. The ropes would never hold her with her cargo on board. I reckon some of the sugar is spoiled; but the boss always has good casks, and maybe there ain't much damage done. The rum is right enough, and I reckon there won't be much spoiled except them bales of calico."

They worked hard, but it was late in the evening before the raft was formed and the cargo all shifted into it.

"Now, we will just chop off this arm and free her," Hiram said, "and then we can stretch ourselves out for the night. We have done a tidy day's work, I reckon, and have arned our sleep."

The arm was chopped through, and the boat was freed from the tree which had, in the first place, so nearly destroyed it, but which, in the end, had proved their means of safety. The raft was fastened alongside by a rope, and the negroes betook themselves to it for the night, while the two white men, as before, lay down to sleep on the cabin-top.

CHAPTER VIII.

STARTING FOR THE WEST.

THE NEXT morning they found, to their satisfaction, that the river had sunk nearly a foot. The boat had risen considerably when the cargo had been removed the evening before, and the ropes overhead had been proportionately tightened so that she now hung so high that the rents were well out of water, and they were able at once to set about the work of repair. There were tools on board, for during their prolonged trips it was often necessary to execute repairs of one kind or other. The flooring-boards were utilized for the repairs, and by evening the holes were closed effectually.

The next day the work was strengthened by additional ribs and stringers, a coat of pitch was put on outside and in, and Hiram pronounced the work complete. From time to time the ropes had been loosened as the river continued to fall, although less rapidly, and it was thought well not to put too great a strain upon them. The next morning the plug was again driven into the bottom of the boat, and they set to work to pump and bale her out, and then shifted the cargo back again from the raft. This was not a long job, and at night, after a great washing-up of the cabins, to get rid of the mud that had been left there, they had the satisfaction of taking possession of their old quarters.

"Well, lad," Hiram said, when they lighted their pipes after supper, "I never thought we were coming so well out of that job. With plenty of rice and sugar, not to speak

of rum, on board, I didn't expect we war going to starve, but I thought we might have been weeks and weeks—ay, months, maybe—before any one came along, and the thought as came into my mind was as we should have to make a raft and pole along till we got out into the river again. However, here we are, with the boat not much the worse, and everything on board ready for a start in the morning; and it's thanks to you as we have done it, for I am free to say as I don't think as I should have hit on this plan as we have carried out. You are a good mate to work with, lad, and no mistake. I don't wish never to get a better. It's a pity ye don't mean to stick to it for good, for I can swar that you would make one of the best hands on the Mississippi, in time."

The journey down the river was continued next morning. At the first place they stopped at they heard reports of widespread damage, of great tracts submerged, and of danger to life; the river was still at full flood, although it had fallen two feet from its highest level, and the next ten days were spent in rescuing the unfortunate people from the tops of the houses, trees, and patches of rising ground on which they had taken refuge. Then, having done all they were able, and the river having now fallen nearly to its average level, they continued their voyage down to New Orleans.

Hiram, in his report of the voyage to his employer, spoke in high terms of Frank's conduct, and ascribed to his quickness of invention their escape from what seemed likely to be an almost endless detention.

"But I am afraid he has made his last v'yage with me," he said; "he is talking of striking out across the plains to Californy. There was a good talk of gold thar before we started; and last night, after we came in, and went in for a drink and to hear the news, there didn't seem nothing else to talk about. The young chap was asking all sorts

of questions, and I expect he's off; and I don't know as I blames him. He's the sort of fellow to get on. He has plenty of grit; he's strong and active now, and in a couple of years he will widen out and make a very big man. He's had a first-rate edication—he don't talk about it, but one would be blind not to see that—he will make his way wherever he goes, and I don't blame him for striking out from the river. He likes the river, too; but it ain't the place for making a fortin, unless you've got money at your back, as you have, boss. But I don't know if he had money, and could go into steamers and such like, that he would stick to it.

"I don't know nowt of his history, but I think things must have gone hard with him somehow, and he came out here for excitement more than for making money. But there's nothing reckless about him; he don't drink, and he don't gamble, and it says a lot for a young fellow in New Orleans that he don't do one or the other. And he can fight, he can; there ain't no doubt about that. Why, I saw him give the biggest kind of thrashing to the bully of a lumber camp, where we moored up alongside one night, as ever you seed. The chap was big enough to eat him, but he didn't have no kind of show. The young un just hit him where he liked, and in five minutes that chap's face was a thing to see, and the lad never got so much as a scratch. I wouldn't have thought as a man could have used his hands like that if I hadn't been thar. I shall be right-down sorry to lose him."

"I knew well-nigh when I took him on that he was not likely to stay, Hiram; he said as much. He wanted to get to know something about the ways of the country before he decided upon anything. If all young fellows would do as he did, go to work for a few months, instead of loafing about spending their money, and getting into bad ways, and among bad fellows, it would be better for them; he

has only drawn a few dollars for his expenses—when he was down the last time—since he came to work, so he has got a good sum due to him. I will have a talk with him myself. There are a good many parties starting from here and taking the Santa Fé route; but, taking them all in all, I don't think I should recommend him to hang on to one of them."

"No, I should guess they would be a pretty hard lot who would go out from here—gamblers, and horse-thieves, and runaway sailors, and Mexican fighters—neither good to travel with or good to work with; he had better go up and strike from St. Louis."

"He had better go higher still, Hiram; there's a northern route, and I hear a lot of the western men are making across that. However, I will talk to him."

That afternoon Frank went into Mr. Willcox's little office.

"Hiram has been speaking in very high terms of you, and I find that I am indebted to you for the saving of the boat, with what cargo she had on board, which Hiram said he had altogether given up as lost. You seem to have been in a position of very great danger, and to have had an extraordinary narrow escape of your lives. However, I can understand that you are not content to settle down for life on the Mississippi, but I can tell you that with enterprise, judgment, and steadiness there is fortune to be made here still. I am not surprised that the gold-seeking mania has got hold of you."

"It is not so much, sir, the gold-seeking mania as the excitement attending it. I don't think I particularly care about making money, but I do want the excitement of such a life. I have come out for that, and not, as it is generally called, to make my fortune. The course of my life at home has been upset by circumstances into which I need not enter, and, at any rate for a time, I want action, and

excitement. After that, perhaps, I may think of settling down, and what is called making my way."

"I can understand your feeling, lad, and will not try to persuade you to stop at this business. And now, what route are you thinking of taking across the continent?"

"I was thinking of joining a party going direct from here across to Santa Fé."

"I don't think that will be a good plan, lad. The caravans from here are composed, for the most part, of very hard characters, the sort of men who would shoot you for your horse if they took a fancy to it; I would by no means advise you to ally yourself with such men. I can, I think, put you in the way of a better plan than that. I find that a great number of caravans from the West are going by a northern route which crosses the Missouri at a point called Omaha. I have been thinking that this will become an important place, and have made up my mind to freight four or five flats with flour, bacon, and other goods of all sorts, and a frame store, and go up to there and open a business. I shall want a handy man with me at first; I shall take up a storekeeper to leave there in charge, but at first he will want help. If you like to go up in charge of one of the scows, and to stay to help put up the store and set things running, I will give you a hundred dollars, and you can have your passage up for your horse, which I should advise you to buy here. You will get one that will carry you, though of course not much to look at, for about fifty dollars; I know several horse-dealers here, and will get one for you if you like. You had also better get a stout pony to carry your traps and provisions; that will cost about forty dollars. Then you must have a rifle and a Colt. These are absolutely necessary for such a journey, for I hear that the Indians are very troublesome on the plains. These, however, I myself shall have much pleasure in presenting you with, in testimony of the obligation I

feel I owe you for saving my boat and goods. The hundred dollars that are due to you, and the hundred that you will further earn at Omaha, will be sufficient for your horses and outfit, which will leave this money which you placed in my hands untouched. You will find that very useful, for you will want to buy a tent and provisions and tools out there, and money to keep you till you hit upon gold. Well, what do you think of my offer?"

"I am extremely obliged to you, sir; nothing could suit me better. And I am indeed greatly obliged for your kind offer of a rifle and revolver; they will certainly be most necessary, by what one hears of the journey."

"You have some other clothes, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; I have another suit in my portmanteau."

"Very well, put them on, and come back here in an hour's time. It will be a week before my steamer starts, and you had better come and stop with me till then; it will keep you out of mischief, and I should be glad of your company."

At the appointed time Frank returned to the office, dressed in the suit of clothes he had brought with him. A light carriage with a pair of horses was standing at the door.

"Ah!" Mr. Willcox laughed as he came out, "I fancy you look more like yourself now."

Frank took his place in the carriage, Mr. Willcox took the reins, the negro servant sprang up behind, and they were soon rattling through the streets of the town.

Mr. Willcox's house was situated two miles out of the city. It was a large building, with a veranda running round it, and standing in well-kept and handsome grounds; three or four negroes ran out as the carriage drove up.

"Sam, take this gentleman's portmanteau upstairs, and get a bath ready for him at once, and lay out a suit of white clothes for him.

"We always have a bath before dinner in this country," he said to Frank; "one wants to get rid of the dust of the day. Dinner will be ready in half an hour."

After enjoying a luxurious bath, and attiring himself in a suit of snowy-white gear, Frank descended to the dining-room.

Mr. Willcox was a widower, without children, and they therefore dined alone. As they were sitting over their wine after dinner in the veranda, Frank's host said, "I did not wish to be inquisitive, but if you don't mind telling me, I should like to know why a young fellow like yourself should embark upon a life of adventure."

Frank had met with such kindness from his employer, that he frankly told him the whole history of the events which had driven him from England.

"It is a singular story," the trader said, "and I own that appearances were against you. Of course I don't know him, and maybe misjudge him altogether, but the only person who appears to me to have had any interest whatever in getting you into disgrace, and causing you to leave the country, is your cousin."

"Fred Barkley," Frank exclaimed, in surprise; "I can assure you such an idea never entered my mind; he is not at all a bad fellow, though certainly he is not popular at school."

"I should prefer taking the general verdict of the school to yours," the trader said; "boys are seldom far out in their estimate of persons; they have more instinct than men, and a boy is seldom far wrong in his estimate of character.

"The fact that he is generally unpopular is, in my mind, a proof that there is something wrong about this cousin of yours. Then what you tell me, that he refused to lend you the money which would have got you out of your scrape, while he afterward came forward with twenty

pounds to enable you to get away, is another strong point. The advice which he gave you was distinctly bad; for you had much better have remained, and to the last have protested your innocence. Then there is another point. Did I gather from your words that you and he are the nearest relations to the wealthy uncle with whom you lived?"

"Yes, that is so," Frank replied.

"Then, in case of your disgrace, it is by no means improbable that your uncle will leave him the whole of the money. Is that so?"

"I have no doubt of it," Frank assented.

"Then you see he has a very strong interest in bringing you into discredit. Besides there were only, you say, five people who had any knowledge of this affair, and of your need for the money. None of the other four had the slightest possible interest in bringing you into disgrace; he had a very strong interest, and, take my word for it, your cousin is at the bottom of the whole affair."

"I cannot believe it," Frank said, rising from his chair and pacing up and down the veranda; "if I thought so I would return to England by the next ship and have it out with him."

"But you have no shadow of proof," Mr. Willcox said, "it is a matter of suspicion only. Even had the idea occurred to you at first, you would only have injured yourself by stating it, for it would have been regarded as a hideous aggravation of your crime to bring such a charge against your cousin unsupported by a shadow of proof. No; now you have taken your line you must go through with it, and trust to time to right you. It is a suspicion only, but you mark my words, if the mystery is ever solved it will be found that your cousin was at the bottom of it."

Frank spent a very pleasant week at the charming residence of Mr. Willcox. The latter entertained a good deal, and Frank met at his house several of the leading mer-

chants of New Orleans, and acquired a good deal of knowledge of the state of the country. Most of them were incredulous as to the stories of the abundance of gold in California. That gold had been discovered they did not deny; but they were of opinion that the find would be an isolated one, and that ruin would fall upon the crowds who were hastening either across the continent, or by ship *via* Panama, to the new Eldorado. Several of them tried to dissuade Frank from his intention of going thither, and more than one offered to place him in their counting-houses, or to procure him employment of other kind.

Frank, however, was firm, for he was going, not for the sake of making money, but of finding adventure and excitement. He went down every day to the wharf and superintended the loading of the scows, and at the end of ten days he resumed his boatman's clothes and took his place on one of the scows. Hiram accompanied him, with eight negroes, two for each flat. A tug took them in tow, and they started up the river. Mr. Willcox was to follow by a steamer next day, and would arrive at Omaha some time before them, and have time to choose and buy a lot of land for his store, and to have all in readiness for their arrival. Frank had purchased a strong, serviceable horse for his own riding, and a pony for his baggage, together with blankets and other necessaries for the journey. His mining outfit he decided to get at Sacramento, as, although the cost would be considerable, he did not wish to encumber himself with it on his journey across the plains. The rifle and revolver had been presented him by Mr. Willcox, and he determined to practice steadily with both on his voyage up the river, as his life might depend on his proficiency with his weapons.

The voyage up the Mississippi and Missouri was performed without any notable adventure, although in the little-known waters of the upper river the tug ran several

times aground. Those on board the flats had but little to do, their duties being confined to pumping out the water when there was any leakage; and the negroes had been taken up more for the purpose of unloading the cargo, carrying it to its destination, and putting up the store, than for any service they could render on the voyage. Frank, who had laid in a large store of ammunition for the purpose, amused himself by practicing with his pistol at a bottle towed behind the scow, or with his rifle at floating objects in the stream, in feeding and taking care of his horses, and in listening to many yarns from Hiram.

"I can tell you, lad," the latter said one day, when, after passing St. Louis, they had entered the waters of the Missouri, "thar have been changes on this river since I was a youngster. I was raised at St. Louis, which was not much more than a frontier town in those days, and most of the work lay below; here and there was a farm on the Missouri, but they got thinner as they got higher up, and long before we got to where we are going it was all Indian country. I used to go up sometimes with traders, but I never liked the job; first I didn't like selling 'fire-water,' as they called it, to the Indians, for it made them mad, and brought on quarrels and wars; in the next place, it was a dangerous business. The Indians used to meet the traders at some place they had appointed beforehand, and there would be big feastings; sometimes the traders would come back with the boat loaded up with buffalo robes and skins, and Indian blankets, and such like; once or twice they didn't come back at all, and it was just a mercy that I didn't stay behind with them on one of the trips.

"I went up with a trading party to a place somewhere near this Omaha; we had three boats, with six voyagers in each. I was about five-and-twenty then, and was steersman of one of them. There were four traders; they were in my boat, and they played cards and drank all the way

up. One of the boats was a flat—not a flat like this, but just a big flat-bottomed boat, for they were going, as I understood, to get some good horses from the Indians and take them down to St. Louis. We had pretty hard work getting her along, and a weak crew would never have got her against the stream, though of course we chose a time when the river was low and there wasn't much stream on. Sometimes we rowed, sometimes we poled, keeping along the shallows and back waters; and, though the pay was good, I wasn't sorry when we got to the place appointed; not only because the work was hard, but because I didn't like the ways of them traders, with their gambling, and drinking, and quarreling. However, they gave up drink the last day, and were sober enough when they landed.

"I don't know why, but I didn't think things were going to turn out well. I had heard the traders say as they didn't mean to come up that part of the country agin, and I knew their goods warn't of no account, and that they were going to trade off bad stuff on the Indians. The first two days things went on all right; every evening large lots of goods were brought down to the boats, but except when I went up with the others to the traders' tent to bring the things down I didn't go about much. It was a large camp, with two or three hundred braves, as they calls 'em. I told the men in my boat what I thought of it; but they didn't think much of what I said, and traded a little on their own account, for it was part of the agreement that each man should be allowed to take up fifty dollars'-worth of goods, and have room for what he could get for them. I traded mine away the first day for some buffalo robes, and so hadn't anything to take me away from the boat.

"The third day the trading was done; there was to be a grand feast that night, and the boats were to start the next morning. Most of the men went up to see the fun, but I

persuaded two of my mates in my boat to stop quiet with me. Presently I heard a yell from the camp, which was about three hundred yards away. 'That's mischief,' says I. I had scarce spoken when there was a yelling fit to make your har stand on end, and I heard pistol-shots. 'Quick, lads,' says I, 'catch up a hatchet and stave a hole in the other boats, and push ours a little way out from the bank.' We warn't long in doing that, and then we stopped and listened.

"There was a sharp fight going on, that we could hear, and guessed how it must be going when they war twenty to one. Presently the shouting and firing ceased, and then against the sky-line—for they had lots of fires blazing in camp—we saw a crowd of Injuns come rushing down to the river. We shoved the boat off, and took to our oars; they shouted to us, and then fired at us, and shot their arrows, and swarmed down into the other two boats to come after us, and there was a fresh burst of yells when they found that they wouldn't swim. We didn't stop to talk, you may be sure, but rowed as hard as we could.

"The night was pretty dark, and though several bullets hit the boat, and a dozen of their arrows fell into it, only one of us had a scratch, and that wasn't serious. As soon as we war fairly away, we set to work to roll up the buffalo robes and skins into big bales, and lay them along on each side of the boat, so as form a protection for us from their bullets and arrows; for we guessed they would follow us down, and in many places the river was so shallow they could ride pretty well out to us. They did follow us, on horseback, for the next two days, and shot at us pretty hot at times. Once they rode so far out in the shallows that we dared not pass them; so we dropped anchor above, and took to our rifles, and gave them a pretty sharp lesson, for they lost seven men. After that they didn't try that game any more, but just followed down in hopes we might

stick on a sandbank. I tell you I never looked out so sharp for shallows as I did on that there voyage.

"Fortunately, at the end of the first day a breeze sprang up from the north, and we got up a sail, for we war pretty nigh done, having rowed by turns from the time we pushed off. We war afraid, you see, as they might patch up the other boats and set out after us, though we hoped they mightn't think of it, for these horse Indians don't know nothing of river work. They gave it up at last, and we got safely down to St. Louis. What the trouble was about I never heard, for not one of those who had landed ever got away to tell us. I expect it was some trouble about the quality of the goods, and that the Indians got a notion they were being cheated, which, sure enough, they war."

"Was anything done to punish the Indians, Hiram?"

"Lor' bless you, who was to punish them? Why, there was scarce a settler then west of the Mississippi. No; if traders went among 'em they went among 'em at thar own risk; and, I am bound to say, that if the Indians were treated fair, and the men understood thar ways, thar was no great danger. The Indians knew if they killed traders that others wouldn't come among them, and they wanted goods—guns and powder most of all, but other things too, such as blankets, and cloth as they calls cotton, and hatchets, beads, and other things, and they wanted to trade off thar hosses and buffalo robes, and skins of all kinds. That was the protection the traders had; and it warn't very often the Indians fell foul of them, except it might be a muss got up over the fire-water.

"When the news came down to St. Louis there was a good deal of talk about it; but it got about that these fellows had been taking up trash, and the general verdict was that it sarved 'em right. All the traders on the frontier set their faces agin men who cheated the Indians, not

because they cared for the Indians, mark you, but because anything that made bad blood did harm to the trade all over. However, it gave me a bad scare, and it was a good many years before I came up the Upper Missouri again. There's some men as seems to me to be downright fond of fighting; but I don't feel like that, anyway. If I get into a hard corner, and have got to fight, then I fights, but I had rather go round the other way if I could. Thar are dangers enough on this river for me; what with snags, and shoals, and storms, they are enough for any reasonable man. Then there are the river pirates; they are worse than all, though it's some years since we had much trouble with 'em."

"River pirates, Hiram? I have not heard you say anything about them before. I did not know there were any pirates on these rivers."

"Thar used to be, lad, years back, lots of them, and a pretty lively time we used to have on the river."

"But what sort of pirates, Hiram?"

"Well, thar war two sorts, you see, at that time. Five-and-twenty years ago the settlements on the river war a long way apart. You might go fifty miles without seeing a village when you once got past the plantations on the lower river; you may say as this region then was like what Kansas is now. Chaps who had made it too hot for them in the east came out here, and just had to wrestle round for a living. New Orleans is pretty bad now, but it was a sight worse then; and St. Louis was a pretty hard place. Then, too, thar war runaway slaves. So you see, one way or the other, a fellow who wanted to get together a band up to any mischief had not to look far for men.

"Well, as I said, thar war two sorts. Thar war the men who lived away from the river, say in the low country between the Arkansas and the main stream, which was then pretty nigh all swamp and forest; perhaps they had hosses,

perhaps not, but mostly they had. Well, one fine morning a dozen of them would ride into one of the villages on the river. Thar wasn't much to take thar, you know, onless it war fever, and they had enough of that in thar own swamps. They would wait, maybe, for a day or two, till a boat came in, and as soon as it had made fast they would cover the men with thar rifles, and just empty it of all it had got—powder, blankets, groceries, and dry goods, and what not—and make off again. I got my cargo lifted, I should say, a dozen times that way. It war onpleasant, but thar was nothing for it; and it warn't no use making a fuss when you saw half a dozen rifles pinted at you. Why, in the early days of steamers, more than once they got held up, and the fellows went through the passengers and cargo and took what they fancied.

"Well, that was one sort of pirate. The other was what you may call the regular water pirate. They lived on the islands, in among the back-waters, or wherever thar might be a patch of raised ground among the swamps, and had boats; and they would attack you at night as you war dropping down the stream or poling up the backs. They war wuss nor the others. A sight more nor half of 'em war blacks; and good reason why, for the fevers carried off the whites as joined them before they had been thar long. They was a powerful bad lot, and those who fell into thar hands hadn't much chance of thar lives. The runaway slaves war down on a white man, and he had no marcy to expect at thar hands; besides, they didn't want no tales told which might scare boats from going near the places where they war hiding. So in general they fust emptied the boats, and then scuttled and sunk them, and cut the throats of all on board. Hundreds of boats war missed in those days, and none ever knew for sartin what had become of them.

"I tell you one had to keep one's eyes open in those days.

We had strong crews, and every man was armed, and a pretty sharp lookout was kept; but for all that thar was places, back-waters, and cuts, and such like, whar I wouldn't have been stuck in after dark, not for all the money in Orleans. Even in the open river no one was safe from 'em, for they got so bold they would go out, four or five boat-loads, and attack in broad daylight; things got so bad that no one dared go up or down, unless it was ten or twelve boats together for protection. It war the steamers as broke 'em up; thar ain't no stopping a steamer, and every one took to being towed up or down. Then the population increased, and regular expeditions war got up to hunt 'em down. Altogether it got made too hot for 'em, and the game didn't pay; but for some years, I can tell you, they war a terror to the river."

"And were you never attacked, Hiram?"

"I was chased several times," Hiram said; "but I had a fast boat and a good crew, and we generally had four white men on board then, and plenty of arms. Yes, we had some skirmishes, but it was only once I had a regular set-to with 'em, and that war a pretty bad job."

"How was it, Hiram?"

"Well, you see, the river was pretty full, and the wind had been light for some time, and there warn't no way of making against the main stream; I had waited for three weeks, and me and my mates got sick of it. We had a cargo which was due up the river, and we made up our minds at last that we would push on and take our chance. We had eight negroes, all strong active fellows, armed with cutlasses and old ship muskets, and we four whites had rifles and pistols. We allowed we could make a good fight of it, so we agreed as we would go up the back-waters, so managing as to be able to get out into the stream every night and anchor thar. We shifted the cargo a bit, so as to pile it up round the sides, stowing the rice-bags so as to make a sort of breastwork; then off we started.

"For some days we got along well; the blacks poled thar best, and every evening we just hit a pint where we could go out into the stream agin. Two or three times we fancied we war watched, for we heard the snapping of twigs, and sounds in the thick swamp jungle ahead; but I reckon they thowt better of it when they saw two rifle-barrels peeping out from the sacks on each side, and saw we war ready for a tussle. But one day—it wasn't very far from the pint where we mended up that boat the other day—we war later than usual; the stream war stronger than we reckoned on, we had run aground two or three times on the mud, and it war getting dark, and we had two miles yet before we got to a place where we could get out into the river. The blacks war working thar hardest; it didn't need no words from us to keep 'em at it, for they knew as well as we did what was the danger, and the boat just flew along that narrow channel.

"We war on the watch, with our eyes fixed on the bank, and our ears pretty wide open to catch any sound ahead. All of a sudden a gun was fired close alongside. The blacks gave a yell, and would have jumped down into shelter, only I shouted, 'Stick to your poles, men; if you lose them we are done for; there's no danger, it's only one man.' So on we went again, for, luckily, no one was hit. 'That's a signal, Bill,' says I to one of my mates. 'I reckon we shall have trouble afore we are out of this.' On we went, flying between the bushes, which warn't fifteen yards apart. Not a sound was heard but the panting of the blacks, the splash of their poles in the water, and a sort of sighing noise behind, as the ripples the boat made as she glided along rustled among the boughs which dipped down into the stream.

"We had got a mile further when we heard a noise. It was much as a pole might make knocked against the side of the boat. I knew thar was mischief now. 'Get in

your poles, lads,' I said; 'four of you get out oars through the holes we have left for them atween the bags, and put your muskets close at hand; the other four get your muskets, and station yourselves two on each side.' We went on slowly now; we knew they war ahead of us, and that hurrying wouldn't do no good, and that we had got to fight anyhow. It might have been five minutes when thar was a flash from the bushes on either side—which we could scarce see in the darkness, and fully a dozen muskets poured a volley into us, buckshot and ball, as we found on looking over the boat the next morning. It was a good job as we put them rice-bags in place, for I reckon thar wouldn't have been many of us up to fighting if they hadn't been thar. We had agreed not to fire back if we war fired at from the wood, for they couldn't do us much harm thar, and it was best to keep our fire for the boats which they war sure to have as well.

"The moment the volley was fired two boats shot out, one from each side. 'Now, give it 'em,' says I. Up we jumped, four on each side, and poured our fire into the boats, which warn't twelve feet away. The darkies who war rowing had been told what to do, and, to do 'em justice, they did it well. Thar was a yell from the boats as we fired, for I reckon every shot told; but the way they had got brought 'em on, and their bows struck us just at the same moment. Then at it we went with our pistols as they crowded forward and tried to get on board. It was over in half a minute, for the four blacks had seized their poles, and, shoving them into the boats, two on each side, pushed 'em off.

"I have heard pretty tall language on the Mississippi, but I never heard such volleys of cussing as came up from them boats; some of the men blazed away with thar guns, some shouted to others to row alongside, some who war hit yelled and cussed like fiends; and all this time we war

lying behind the bags, ramming down fresh charges for the bare life. We gave 'em eight more shots before they could cast off the poles and come at us again. This time they came along more on the broadside, and five or six of 'em sprang on board; but we war ready with the butts of our rifles, and the blacks with thar cutlasses, and we cleared them off again. The four darkies had stuck to thar poles; one boat was shoved off, and one of the blacks run his pole right through the bottom of the other, and in a minute she went down.

"The other boat didn't know what had happened, and came up again; but leaving two of the blacks to chop down any of the fellows in the water who might try to climb aboard, the other ten of us stood up and fought 'em fair. Our blood was up now, and our darkies fought like demons. The pirates soon found they had the worst of it, and would have got apart from us if they could; but we jumped into thar boat and fought them thar, and they soon jumped over and made for the bank. Directly it was over they began to fire agin from the shore, and we jumped back into shelter agin in our own boat and manned the four oars agin. We fastened the painter of the boat on to our stern, and towed her behind us, and in another half an hour were out in the stream. It was a toughish fight, I can tell you, while it lasted; two of the blacks and one of my mates had been hit by thar musket-balls, and the rest of us war either gashed by thar knives or had got ugly cracks. However, six of them war lying in the boat when we hauled it alongside; two war stone dead, the other four had been stunned with the butt ends of the muskets or cut down by the darkies' sabers. We took 'em down to the next place and handed 'em over to the sheriff; and as thar happened to be a-lot of boats waiting thar for the wind, you may guess it warn't many hours afore they tried and hung 'em.

"When the chaps heard the particulars, and that we had

sunk one boat, besides bringing off another, they guessed as likely enough the pirates war trapped thar; and so they got up a regular expedition, six boats, each with a dozen men. I went back to show 'em the place. They brought dogs with them, and hunted through the woods and swamps till they came to the patch of higher ground whar the pirates had got thar huts. Thar were about twenty of 'em, mostly negroes, and they fought hard, for thar was no escape, the boat having drifted away after it had sunk. Behind thar war some widish channels, and some of the boats had gone round thar to cut 'em off if they took to swimming. They war killed, every man jack, and that put an end to one of the very worst lots of pirates we ever had on the river."

"You were lucky to have got out of it so well, Hiram. I suppose that sort of thing is quite over now."

"Yes. In course thar are water thieves still, chaps who steal things from the boats if thar is no one with 'em, or if you are all asleep below; but thar haven't been no real pirates for years now—leastways not above New Orleans. Down in the great swamps, by the mouth of the river, thar's always gangs of runaway slaves, and desperate characters of all sorts, who have got to live somehow. Thar are still boats sometimes missing up the river, which may have been snagged and gone down with all hands, and which maybe have comed to thar end some other way. Anyhow, no one thinks much about pirates now, and the river's quite as safe as the streets of New Orleans. That mayn't be saying much, perhaps, but it's good enough. Of course a party might any day take to the swamps and stop up-passing boats, just as they might take to the roads and stop wagons going west; but one doesn't trouble about things onless they get so as to be what you might call a general danger.

"You can't go into a barroom without a risk of getting

into a fight with a drunken rowdy; you can't stop at one of these landing-places but what thar's a chance of getting into a mess with fellows who come in from the backs for a spree, and one doesn't look to have these rivers which, one and the other, are tens of thousands of miles long, just kept as free from hard characters as a street in Boston. It's as good as we can look for at present. Settlement is going on wonderful fast, and, like enough, in another forty years there won't be any more pirates on the great rivers here than thar are on the seas. Steam and settlements is bound to wipe 'em out at last."

During the last two or three hundred miles of the journey up the Missouri a few settlements only were passed, little villages nestling closely together on the edge of the river, surrounded often by a stockade; for although the Indians were gradually falling back before the advance of the whites, Indian wars were of frequent occurrence, and then the bands of wild horsemen swept down to the Missouri, carrying fire and destruction in their course. In front of every settlement lay a scow or two, used partly for the transportation of the crops, but valuable also as an ark of refuge in case of attack. The shores were low, and shallows and banks abounded in the stream, and sometimes the tug ran aground four or five times in the course of the day. In spite of his practice with his firearms, and Hiram's talk and stories, Frank began to find the days pass very slowly, and was not a little glad when Hiram pointed out a cluster of huts on the left bank, and said, "There is Omaha."

Half an hour later the tug was alongside, and Mr. Willcox was on board.

"I am glad to see you up," he said, as the flats were moored to the bank, and Frank stepped ashore and joined him. "The time has gone slowly here; for though I stayed four days at St. Louis, I have been here nearly a week. There is lots to do, and I am greatly pleased that I went

in for it. I wish you could have made up your mind to settle here; you would have made a precious deal better thing of it than you ever will do by digging for gold. However, I know it's no use talking about that. I have got a capital location on the main street; I bought it off a fool who came up in the steamboat with me, and had made up his mind to sell out and cross the plains. I had an offer for it yesterday at five times the price I gave for it; but, bless you, I wouldn't have taken twenty times. This is going to be a big place. I am glad you have come for another reason. I am putting up at one of the shanties they call an hotel, but one might as well try to live in the tower of Babel. There is an uproar day and night; every inch of the floor is taken up for sleeping on, and I have been nearly driven out of my mind. Now I can live on board the tug till she goes down with the empty flats. I am glad I brought up those eight negroes, for there would be the greatest difficulty in hiring hands here; every one seems to have gone stark mad, and to consider every hour's delay in pushing west as so much loss of a chance of making a fortune."

For the next fortnight the labor was incessant. Hiram, Frank, and the eight negroes toiled in landing the stores and the framework of the house, and in transporting them to the lot which Mr. Willcox had purchased. Even the engineers of the tug were induced by the high payment Mr. Willcox offered to aid in the work. Several stretchers, or hand-barrows, had been brought up with them, and on these such bales and boxes as were too heavy for one man to carry were transported. The framework of the house was first carried to the site, and four of the negroes who were good carpenters at once began to put it together, so that by the time the last of the goods were brought up the store was ready to receive them. It was a building some sixty feet long by twenty wide, and was divided into two

by a partition; the one end, twenty feet in length, was the saleroom; in the other, forty feet long, the bulk of the heavy goods, flour, rice, bacon, hogsheads of sugar, and chests of tea, were stored. There was, in addition, a lean-to, nine feet square, at one end, which was to serve as the habitation of the storekeeper. The assortment of goods was very large. In addition to the stock of provisions, which filled the storeroom nearly up to the roof, were a great quantity of clothing fitted for the rough work of the plains, a large assortment of rifles and pistols, kegs of ammunition, casks of axle-grease, ironwork for wagons, and all the miscellaneous stores, down to needles and thread, which would be likely to be required by the emigrants. As soon as the stores were all safely on shore and housed, the tug started down the river again with the flats; Hiram and six of the negroes accompanied them, two of the latter being retained as assistants to the storekeeper. Between Hiram and Frank there was a very cordial adieu.

"I likes yer, young fellow," the boatman said; "you will make your way, never fear, some day, if you get a chance. Send a line to me, to the charge of the boss, and let me know how things go with you. I shall be gladder than I can tell you to hear as you're making your way, and I shall be anxious like till I hear as you have got safely over this journey, for they do say as the Indians are playing all sorts of deviltry with the caravans. Well, there's one thing, you are a good shot now; but be careful, lad, and don't get into no fights if you can keep out of 'em."

Frank remained for another fortnight assisting in the store; by the end of that time things had settled down. They were already doing a very large business, and Mr. Willcox had sent down orders, both to St. Louis and New Orleans, for fresh consignments of stores very greatly exceeding those which he had brought up with him.

Three months previously Omaha had been a tiny settlement of a dozen houses, but was rapidly growing into a considerable place.

Many stores were rising, but the distance from the inhabited settlements, and the difficulties of carriage, were enormous. The population was, for the most part, a floating one, scores of wagons and vehicles of all sorts arriving every day, while as many departed. This was the last point of civilization, and here the emigrants generally halted for a few days to rest their weary cattle, and to fill up their stores of provisions for the journey across the wilderness.

All believed that a vast fortune awaited them on the other side of the continent, and the most fabulous tales of the abundance of gold were circulated and believed. In some cases the parties consisted only of men who had clubbed together and purchased a wagon, and started, leaving their wives and families behind them. In others they were composed of whole familes, who had sold off farms or businesses in the east in the assurance of acquiring a fortune at the gold-diggings. Around the little settlement the plain was dotted with the white tilts of the wagons, mingled with the tents which had been extemporized of sail-cloth, tarpaulins, and blankets.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE PLAINS.

"I THINK now that you can spare me, Mr. Willcox," Frank said, just a month after the day of landing. "The store has got into swing now; the two negroes know their work well, and everything is going on smoothly; therefore, if you have no objection, I shall see about making a start."

"I shall be sorry to lose you," Mr. Willcox said; "but, as you say, the place will run itself now. I shall go down by the next steamer, and send up two more storekeepers and a celrk from my office there. This is going to be a big thing. Well, lad, here's the money you gave me to take care of, and the two hundred dollars due to you. I will give orders to Simpson that you are to take everything you can require for your journey from the store, and mind don't stint yourself; you have done right-down good service here, and I feel very much indebted to you for the way you have stuck to me at this pinch. I wish you every luck, lad, and I hope some day that rascally affair at home will be cleared up, and that you can go back again cleared of that ugly charge. Anyhow, it is well for you to make your way out here. It will be a satisfaction for you, if you do go back, to have shown that you were dependent on no one, but that you could fight your own way, and make your living by the aid of your own hands and your own brain. And now look here, if at any time you get sick of gold-digging, as you very well may, and want to turn your hand to anything else—and in a country like that, mind

you, with a population pouring in from all parts, there will be big opportunities—if you want capital to start you, just you send a letter to David Willcox, New Orleans, and tell me you have drawn on me for five thousand dollars. I am a rich man, lad, and have no children of my own; I have some nephews and nieces who will get my money some day, but I can do what I like with it, and you will be heartily welcome to the sum I mention. I have taken a fancy to you, and it will be a real pleasure to me to help you. If you do well you can some day send the money back, if you like; if you don't do well, there's an end of it. Don't let it trouble you for a moment, for it certainly won't trouble me, and be sure you don't hesitate to draw it when you want it. Remember, I shan't regard it as an obligation, but it will be a real genuine pleasure to me to cash that order."

Frank thanked Mr. Willcox very heartily for his kind offer, of which he promised to avail himself should an opportunity arise, and in any case to write to him occasionally to tell him how he was getting on. Then he strolled out to examine the great gathering round the settlement, which hitherto he had had no time to do, having been at work from daybreak until late at night. As he wandered among the motley throng of emigrants, he was struck with the hopefulness which everywhere prevailed, and could not but feel that many of them were doomed to disappointment. Many of them were store-keepers, men who had never done a day's work in their life; some were aged men, encumbered with wives and large families, and Frank wondered how these would ever survive the terrible journey across the plains, even if they escaped all molestation from the marauding Indians. He paused for a moment near four men who were seated round a fire cooking their meals.

All were sturdy, sunburnt men, who looked inured to hardship and work. The fact that all were animated by a

common impulse rendered every one friendly and communicative, and Frank was at once invited to sit down.

"Of course you are going through, young fellow?"

"Yes," Frank said, "I am going to try."

"Got a horse, I suppose?"

"Yes," Frank said, "a riding horse, and a pony for my baggage."

"We calls it swag out on the plains," one said; "we don't talk of baggage here. Are you with any one?"

"No," Frank replied, "I am alone; but I am open to join some party. I suppose there will be no difficulty about that."

"None on airth," the other answered; "the stronger the better. In course you have a rifle, besides that Colt in your belt?"

"Yes," Frank replied; "but I suppose all this Indian talk is exaggeration, and there is not much danger from them."

"Don't you go to think it, young man; the Injins is thar, you bet, and no mistake, and a big grist of scalps they will take. The news of this here percession across the plains will bring them down as thick as bees on the track, and I tell you there will be some tough fights afore we get across."

"Have you had much experience of the plains?" Frank asked.

"We are hunters," the other said briefly, "and have been out there, more or less, since we were boys. We knows what Injins is, and have fought them agin and agin; but none of us have ever made this journey, indeed there warn't five men who had ever crossed the Rockies by the northern track afore the gold scare began. But I know enough of the country to know as it will be a fearful journey, and full half of these people as you see fooling about here as if they were out for a summer excursion will leave their bones by the way."

"You don't really think things are as bad as that," Frank said.

"I does," the other replied emphatically. "What with Injins, and want of food and water, and fatigue, and the journey across the plains, it will want all a man to make the journey. We four means to get through, and are bound to do it; but as for this crowd you see here, God help them!"

"Do you mean to go with one of the caravans, or start alone?"

"There is a lot going on to-morrow, and we shall join them. We may be of some use, for the best part of them are no better than a flock of sheep, and four good hands may keep them out of some mischief; but I expect we shall have to push on by ourselves before the journey is over."

"I am intending to go on to-morrow also," Frank said, "and I hope you won't mind giving me some instructions in the ways of the wilderness, which are, I own, altogether new to me."

"All right, young fellow; we shall see you on the road, and if you likes to chum up with us you may, for I likes yer looks, and you seems to be one of the right sort."

Frank said that he would gladly chum with them if they would allow him, and the next morning, at daybreak, having said adieu to Mr. Willcox, he saddled his horse and loaded up his pony, and moved across to the spot where his new acquaintances were encamped. They were preparing for a start. All had good riding horses, while two baggage animals carried the provisions for the party. The caravan which they intended to accompany was already far out on the plain.

"They are off in good time," Frank said; "I did not think they would manage to move till midday."

"No more they would," one of the hunters said; "but

the chap as is bossing the team moved them off yesterday evening, and got them a mile out of camp, so they were able to start right off the first thing this morning."

In a few minutes they were on horseback, and, riding at easy pace for the sake of the baggage-horses, they overtook the caravan in two hours. It consisted of fourteen wagons, and four or five light carts with tilts over them. The wagons were all drawn by oxen, having six, eight, or ten according to their size or weight. The men walked by the side of their cattle; the greater part of the women and children trudged along behind the wagons, while a few with babies were seated within them. From time to time one of the men or boys would set up a song, and all would join in the chorus. One of these was ringing out in the air when the hunters joined them.

"Poor critturs!" the eldest of the hunters, who was called Abe by the others, said, "they are as light-hearted as if they war a-going to a camp meeting; they don't know what's afore them."

The party rode on to the head of the wagons, where the oxen were led by the man who was regarded as the head of the party. He had at one time been a hunter, but had married and settled down on a farm. Two sons, nearly grown-up, walked by his side. He had been chosen as leader by the rest as being the only one of the party who had any previous knowledge of the plains and their dangers and difficulties.

"Well, mate," Abe said, "I told you two days ago that I thought that we should go on with your lot, and here we are. I don't say as how we shall go all the way with you; that will depend upon circumstances; at any rate we will stay with ye for a bit. Now my proposal is this; you shall hitch our three baggage-horses on behind your wagons, and tell off one of the boys to look after them; we shall hunt as we go along, and what meat there is will be for the

service of the camp, but if we supply you with meat it will only be fair that you supply us with flour and tea."

"That's a bargain," the man said. "You bring us in meat, and we will supply you with everything else; and I needn't tell you how glad I am to have you with me. Five extra rifles may make all the difference if we are attacked. We have got about twenty rifles in camp; but that ain't much, as, with women and children, we count up to nigh sixty souls, and none of us here except myself have had any experience of Indian ways."

"That's fixed, then," Abe said. "At any rate you need not be afraid of a surprise so long as we are with you."

The addition to their party gave great satisfaction to the whole caravan. Of flour and bacon they had ample stores to last them upon their long journey, and the prospect of a supply of fresh meat was exceedingly welcome; still more was the thought that the hunters would be able to warn them against any surprise by the Indians, and would, in case of the worst, aid them in their defense.

The hunters were equally satisfied. Their supplies were quite insufficient for the journey, and they were now free from the necessity of accommodating their pace to that of the baggage-horses. Their progress would, indeed, be slower than it would have been had they journeyed alone, but time was a matter of no importance to them. Even in the matter of Indian surprises they were better off than they would have been had they been alone. In case of meeting these marauders, they must have abandoned their baggage-animals; and their prospects, either of flight or defense, would have been poor had they met with a large body when alone, whereas the force with the caravan could defend the wagons against even a resolute attack of the redskins. There was no occasion for the hunters to set out in the pursuit of game for the first day or two, as a supply of fresh meat had been brought from Omaha. They

therefore rode with the caravan, making the acquaintance of its various members.

One of the women had volunteered to cook for them; and thus, when they encamped on the bank of a small stream, they had only to attend to the watering of their animals. While the meal was preparing they walked about in the camp, and gave many hints to the women as to the best way of preparing fires. These were gratefully received, for the emigrants were wholly unaccustomed to cooking without the usual appliances, and their efforts, in many cases, had been very clumsy and unsuccessful. They were surprised to find that by digging a trench in the direction from which the wind was blowing, and covering it over with sods, they could get a draught to their fire equal to that which they could obtain in a grate; while by building a low wall of sod close to leeward of the fire, they prevented the flames from being driven away, and concentrated them upon their pots and kettles.

"It does not matter for to-night," Abe said to the leader, "nor for a good many nights to come; but if I was you I should begin to-morrow to make 'em arrange the wagons in proper form, the same as if we was in the Injin country. It ain't no more trouble, and there's nothing like beginning the right way."

"You are right," the man said, "to-morrow night we will pitch them in good form; but for a time there will be no occasion for the cattle to be driven in every night, the longer they have to graze the better."

"That's so," Abe said; "they will want all their condition for the bad country further on."

The following day the hunters left the camp early. There was little chance of finding game anywhere near the line which they were following, for the wild animals would have been scared away by the constantly passing caravans. After riding for ten miles they began to keep a watchful

eye over the country, which, although flat to the eye, was really slightly undulating. Proceeding at an easy pace, they rode on for upward of an hour. Then Dick, one of the hunters, suddenly drew rein.

"What is it, Dick?" Abe asked.

"I saw a horn over there to the left, or I am mistaken," the hunter said.

"We will see, anyhow," Abe said; "fortunately we are down wind now. You had better stop behind this time, young fellow, and watch us."

In a moment the four men dismounted and threw their reins on the horses' necks—a signal which all horses on the plains know to be an order that they are not to move away—and the animals at once began cropping the grass. For a short distance the men walked forward, and then, as they neared the brow over which Dick declared he had seen the horn, they went down on all fours, and finally, when close to the brow, on their stomachs.

Very slowly they drew themselves along. Frank looked on with the greatest attention and interest, and presently saw them halt, while Abe proceeded alone. He lifted up his head slightly, and immediately laid it down again, while the other three crawled up close to him. There was a moment's pause, then the guns were thrust forward, and each slightly raised himself.

A moment later the four rifles flashed, and the men sprang to their feet and disappeared over the brow. Frank rode forward at full speed to the spot, and arrived there just in time to see a number of deer dashing at full speed far across the plain, while the four hunters were gathered round three dead stags in the hollow. The hunters' shots had all told; but two had fired at the same animal, the bullet-holes being close to each other behind the shoulder.

"Dick was right, you see," Abe said. "It was lucky he caught sight of that horn, for we might not have come

upon another herd to-day. Now we will make our way on to the camping-ground; we can go easy, for we shall be there long before the teams."

Their horses were brought up, and the deer placed upon them. The hunters then mounted, and took their way in the direction of the spot where the caravans would encamp for the night.

"I understand how you find your way now, because the sun is up," Frank said, "but I cannot understand how you would do it on a cloudy day, across a flat country like this, without landmarks."

"It's easier to do than it is to explain it," Abe said. "In the first place there's the wind; it most always blows here, and one only has to keep that in a certain quarter. If there ain't no wind, there's the grass and the bushes; if you look at these bushes you will see that they most all turn a little from the direction in which the wind generally blows, and this grass, which is in seed, droops over the same way. Then, in course, there is the general direction of the valleys, and of any little streams. All of these are things one goes by at first, but it gets to come natural, what they call by instinct; one knows, somehow, which is the way to go without looking for signs. You will get to it in time, if you are long enough on the plains; but at present you watch the forms of all the bushes and the lay of the grass, 'cause you see in hunting we might get separated, and you might miss your way. If you should do so, and ain't sure of your direction, fire your gun three times, as quick as you can load it, and if we are in hearing we will fire a gun in reply and come to you; but you will soon get to know the signs of the country if you will pay attention and keep your eyes skinned."

They arrived at the stream fixed upon for the camping-ground early in the afternoon. The point at which the caravans would cross it was plain enough, for the wagons

all traveled by the same line, and the trail was strongly marked by the ruts of wheels where the ground was soft, by broken bushes, and trampled herbage. The saddles were taken off the horses, and these were allowed to graze at will; those of the hunters were too well-trained to wander far, and Frank's horse was certain to keep with the others.

Late in the afternoon the wagons arrived; it had been a long march of more than twenty miles, and men and beasts were alike tired. The women and children had, during the latter part of the journey, ridden in the wagons. There was a general feeling of satisfaction at the sight of the hunters and their spoil, and at the blazing fire, over which a portion of the meat was already roasting. The oxen were unharnessed and watered, the wagons were ranged six on each side, and two across one end, the other end being left open for convenience; across this the light carts were to be drawn at night. The deer were skinned, cut up, and divided among the various families in proportion to their numbers.

For two months the caravan moved forward without adventure. The hunters kept it well provided with game, which was now very plentiful. Very disquieting rumors were afloat along the road. These were brought down by the express riders who carried the mails across the plains and for whose accommodation small stations were provided, twenty or thirty miles apart; and as these were placed where water was procurable, they were generally selected as camping-grounds by the emigrants.

The tales of Indian forays, which had at first been little more than rumors, were now confirmed. The express riders reported that the Indians were out in large numbers, and that many attacks had been made upon parties of emigrants, sometimes successfully, and involving the massacre of every soul in them. The caravan was still some

distance from the scene of these attacks; but as the Indians ranged over the whole plains, it could not be said that they were beyond the risk of assault. Acting under the hunters' advice, the caravan now moved in much closer order, the wagons advancing two abreast, so that they could be formed in position for defense at the shortest notice; and the rifles were always kept loaded, and strapped on the outsides of the wagons in readiness for instant use.

Frank had by this time become an adept in hunting, and though still very far behind his companions in skill with the rifle, was able to make a fair contribution toward the provisioning of the camp. The hunters now divided into two parties, three going out in search of game on one side of the line of march, two on the other; they thus acted as scouts on either side, and would be able to bring in word should any suspicious signs be observed. Several small herds of buffalo had been met with, and a sufficient number killed to provide the party with meat for some time to come.

Frank had never passed a more enjoyable time than those two months of travel. The air was clear, bright, and exhilarating; the long days spent in the saddle, and the excitement of the chase, seemed to quicken his pulse and to fill him with a new feeling of strength and life. His appetite was prodigious, and he enjoyed the roughly cooked meals round the blazing fire of an evening as he had never enjoyed food before. The country was, it is true, for the most part monotonous, with its long low undulations, and the bare sweeps, unbroken by tree or bush; but there was always something new and interesting to be seen, for Frank was fond of natural history, and the habits and ways of the wild creatures of the prairie were full of interest for him. His companions, although taciturn when on horseback and engaged in scouting the country, or in hunting, were full of anecdote as they sat

round the fire of an evening, and Frank heard many a story of wild adventure with the Indians or in the chase.

When they returned early to the camp, there was plenty of amusement in wandering about among the wagons, watching the various groups engaged at their work as unconcernedly as if they had been still in their little farms among the settlements, instead of on the plains with months of toilsome and dangerous journey before them. Some of the women cooked, while others mended their clothes and those of their husbands and children, while the men attended to the oxen, or made such repairs as were needed to the wagons and harness.

As for the children, the life suited them admirably; to them it was a continual picnic, without school or lessons. And yet they too had their share of the work, for as soon as the wagons halted, all save the very little ones started at once over the plain to search for the dried buffalo dung, or, as it was called, chips, which formed the staple of the fires; for wood was very scarce, and that in the neighborhood of the camping-grounds, which were always at a stream or water-hole, had long since been cleared off by the travelers who had preceded them. The chips afforded excellent fuel, burning with a fierce, steady glow, and making a fire something like that afforded by well-dried peat. Another source of fuel were the bones which lay in many places, scattered pretty thickly. Sometimes these marked the spot where long before a party of Indians had come upon a herd of buffalo, sometimes they were remains of the cattle of caravans which had preceded them; these were often quite fresh, the herds of coyotes stripping off the flesh of any animals that fell by the way, and leaving nothing in the course of a day or two after their death but the bare bones. Whenever the caravan came upon such a skeleton upon the line of march, the men broke it up, and flung the bones into one of the wagons for the night's fire.

Sometimes, as they got well on in their journey, they came to patches of soap-weed, a vegetable of soft, pulpy nature, which grows to a considerable height, and dies from the bottom, retaining its greenness of appearance long after the stem has become brown and withered; it burns freely, with a brilliant flame. The women of the party rejoiced when a clump of soap-weed was discovered, and it was always the occasion of a general wash, as by immersing some of it in water it had all the properties of soap, except that it did not make the lather which distinguishes the real article. But in places where the soap-weed was not to be found, and chips were scarce, the hunters did their best to supply fuel, and would generally bring home large bundles of wood upon such of the horses as were not carrying game.

The children's greatest delight was when the camp happened to be pitched near a prairie-dog town, and they were never weary of watching the antics of these funny little creatures. Some of these towns were of considerable extent, the ground within their circle being quite bare of herbage from their scratching, and the constant scampering of their little feet, and covered thickly with the mounds which marked the entrances to the innumerable holes. The prairie-dogs themselves were about the size of rabbits, but seemed to Frank, from their quick, jerking motions, and their habit of sitting up on their hind-legs, to resemble squirrels more than any other animal. They were as much interested in the travelers as the latter were with them, almost every mound having its occupant sitting up watching them inquisitively. There were four or five dogs with the caravan, and until the novelty had passed off, and they became convinced of the utter futility of the chase, the dogs exhausted themselves in their endeavors to capture the prairie-dogs. These seemed to feel an absolute enjoyment in exasperating the dogs, sitting immovable until the

latter were within a few yards of them, and then suddenly disappearing like a flash of lightning down their holes, popping their heads out again and resuming their position on the tops as soon as the dogs had dashed off in another direction.

But the prairie-dogs were not the only occupants of the towns; with them, apparently on terms of great friendship, lived a colony of little owls, sharing their abodes, and sitting with them on their hillocks. There were also a third species of inhabitant, and the presence of these caused strict orders to be given to the children not to wander over the ground; these were rattlesnakes, of which, on a sunny afternoon, many could be seen basking on the sand-heaps.

"Yes, you always find the three together," Abe said, in answer to Frank's question, "and how such contrary things get to be friends is more nor I can tell. Sartin they must eat each other, there ain't anything else for 'em to eat. The prairie-dogs air a puzzle; you never see 'em any distance beyond thar towns, and yet they must live on grass and roots. The owls, no doubt, live on little prairie-dogs and the rattlesnakes may sometimes eat an old one. Still, there it is; they never seem afraid of each other, and no one, as far as I knows, has ever seen a prairie-dog fifty yards away from his town. The rummest thing about them is as every town has got its well. The prairie-dogs have all got their holes, and though you may see 'em going about popping in and out of each other's houses, I fancy as they always keep to their own. But there's one hole which they all use, and that goes down to the water. No matter how deep it is, they takes it down; I fancy the whole lot digs at it by turns till they get there. You will see thar towns are always on lowish ground, so that they can get down to water all the sooner; that's why they build up those mounds round each hole."

"I thought it was just the earth they had thrown out, Abe."

"So it is, partly; but it serves to keep the water out in the wet season too. If you watch 'em you can see 'em building the earth up and patting it down hard if it gets broken down. Sometimes, in very wet weather, thar will be a flood, and then the whole lot, dogs and owls and snakes, get drowned all together. Mighty nasty places they are, I tell yer, when they are desarted. At other times you can see 'em plain enough, and can ride through 'em at a gallop, for the horses are accustomed to pick thar way; but after a year or two, when the grass grows again, and is breast high in summer, and you come across one of them, the first you know about it is the horse puts his foot in a hole, and you are flying through the air. Many a fall have I had from them darned little things."

"Are they good eating, Abe?"

"Yes, they ain't bad eating; and if you lie down quiet, and shoot straight, you ain't long in making a bag. But you have got to kill 'em to get 'em; if you don't put your bullet through thar head, they just chucks themselves straight down the hole, and it would take an hour's digging, and it may be more, to get at 'em."

"There seems to be a tremendous lot of rattlesnakes in some places, Abe."

"Thar are that, lad; I have seen places where you might kill a hundred in an hour with your Colt. Thar are two sorts, them as you finds on the plains and them as you finds among rocks; one are twice as big as the other, but thar ain't much difference in thar bite."

"Is it always fatal, Abe?"

"Not often, lad, either to man or horse, though I have known horses die when they have been bit in the head when they have been grazing. The best thing is to tie a bandage tightly above the place, and to clap on a poultice of fresh dung—that draws out the poison; and then, if you have got it, drink half a bottle of spirits. It ain't

often we get bit, because of these high boots; but the Injins get bit sometimes, and I never heard of thar dying. The only thing as we are regular feered of out in these plains is a little beast they call the hydrophobia cat."

"I never heard of that. What is it like, Abe?"

"It is a pretty little beast, marked black and white, and about the size of a big weasel. It has got a way of coming and biting you when you are asleep, and when it does it is sartin death; thar ain't no cure for it; the best plan is to put your Colt to your head and finish it at once."

"What horrible little beasts!" Frank said; "I hope they are not common."

"No, they ain't common, and there's more danger from them down south; if you sleeps in an old Mexican hut that's been deserted, or places of that sort, it's best to look sharp round afore you goes to sleep."

The game most commonly met with were the black-tailed and white-tailed deer. These were generally met with in parties of from six to twelve, and were usually stalked, although sometimes, by dividing and taking a wide circle, they could manage to ride them down and get within shot. This could seldom be done with the antelope, which ran in much larger herds, but were so suspicious and watchful that there was no getting within shot, while, once in motion, they could leave the horses behind with ease. The only way in which they could get them would be by acting upon their curiosity. One or two of the hunters would dismount, and crawl through the grass until within three or four hundred yards of the herd; then they would lie on their backs and wave their legs in the air, or wave a colored blanket, as they lay concealed in the grass. The herd would stop grazing and look on curiously, and gradually approach nearer and nearer to investigate this strange phenomenon, until they came well within shot, when the hunters would leap to their feet and send their unerring bullets among them.

"You would hardly believe, now," Peter said, one day when he and Frank had brought down two fine antelopes by this maneuver, "that the coyotes are just as much up to that trick as we are. They haven't got a chance with the deer when they are once moving, although sometimes they may pick up a fawn a few days old, or a stag that has got injured; but when they want deer-meat they just act the same game as we have been doing. Over and over again have I seen them at their tricks; two of them will play them together. They will creep up through the grass till they can get to a spot where the antelope can see them, and then they will just act as if they were mad, rolling over on their backs, waving their legs about, twisting and rolling like balls, and playing the fool, till the antelope comes up to see what is the matter. They let them come on till they are only a few yards away, and then they are on one like a flash, before he has time to turn and get up his speed. One will catch him by a leg, and the other will get at his throat, and between them they soon pull him down. They will sham dead too. Wonderful cute beasts is them coyotes; they are just about the sharpest beasts as live."

"Do they live entirely upon deer?"

"Bless you, no; they will eat anything. They hang about behind the great buffalo herds, and eat them as drops; where there are such tens of thousands there is always some as is old or injured and can't keep up; besides, sometimes they get scared, and then they will run over a bluff and get piled up there dead by hundreds. The coyotes pick the bones of every beast as dies in the plains. The badgers helps them a bit; there are lots of those about in some places."

CHAPTER X.

A BUFFALO STORY.

SOMETIMES, instead of taking his rifle and accompanying the other hunters, Frank would borrow a shotgun, and go out on foot and return with a good bag of prairie-fowl, birds resembling grouse. Occasionally in the canyons, or wooded valleys, far away from the track, the hunters came across the trail of wild turkeys; then two of them would camp out for the night, and search under the trees until they saw the birds perched on the boughs above them, and would bring into camp in the morning half a dozen dangling from each of their saddles. Frequently, in their rides, they came across skunks, pretty black and white little animals. Frank was about to shoot the first he saw, but Peter, who was with him, shouted to him not to fire.

"It's a skunk," he said; "it ain't no use wasting your powder on that varmin. Why, if you were to kill him, and went to take it up, you wouldn't be fit to go into camp for a week; you would stink that bad no one couldn't come near you. They are wuss than pizen, skunks. Why, I have seen dogs sit up and howl with disgust after interfering with one of them. I don't say as they can't be eaten, cos the Indians eat them; and, for the matter of that, I have ate them myself. But they have to be killed plump dead, and then the stink-bag has to be cut out from them directly; but if you ain't hard pressed for food, I advise you to let skunks alone."

The first time that they came across a large herd of

buffalo was a day Frank long remembered. He was out with the four hunters; they had just scampered to the top of one of the swells, when they simultaneously reined in their horses, for the valley—half a mile wide—in front of them was filled with a dark mass of moving animals, extending back for two or three miles.

"There, Frank," Abe said, "there is meat for you—enough for an army for months."

Frank was too surprised to speak for a time; the number seemed countless.

"What a wonderful sight!" he exclaimed at last.

"Ay, that it is, lad, to one who has never seen it afore; and to think that thar are scores of herds like that out on these plains. It's one of the mightiest sights of natur. But it's nothing to see 'em now, going along quiet, to what it is to see 'em when they are on the stampede, when the ground shakes with thar tread, and the air seems in a quiver with thar bellowing; thar don't seem nothing as could stop 'em, and thar ain't. If it's a river, they pours into it; if it's a bluff, they goes over it, and tens of thousands of them gets killed. The Injins is mighty wasteful of thar flesh, but I doubt whether all the Injins in the continent kills as many as kills themselves in them wild stampedes. We will just wait where we are until they are past, and then we will drop down on 'em and cut three or four of 'em off. We will take one apiece; that will give us as much flesh as the wagons can load up, and I don't hold to taking life unless the meat's wanted. Now, lad, all that you have got to do is, when you ride down just single out your beast, ride alongside of him, and empty your Colt behind his shoulder. Keep rather behind him, and have your horse well in hand to wheel if he twists round and charges you."

A few minutes later the signal was given, and the five horsemen dashed down the slope. A deep bellow pro-

claimed that the herd had become aware of the presence of their enemies. The leisurely pace at which they were proceeding changed instantly into a gallop on the part of those conscious of danger. The impulse was communicated to those in front, and in a few seconds the whole herd was tearing along like a mighty torrent.

But they were too late to escape the hunters, who came down upon their rear, and each proceeded to single out an animal. Following Abe's instructions, Frank ranged up alongside a fine bull, and opened fire with his revolver at a point just behind the shoulder. At the third shot the great beast swerved sharply round, and had not Frank been on the alert he would have lost his seat, so sharply did the horse wheel to avoid the animal's horns. The buffalo at once resumed its course behind the herd; but Frank was soon alongside again, and as he fired the last shot of his revolver had the satisfaction of seeing the great beast stagger and then fall prostrate. He at once reined in his horse and looked round. His companions were all some distance in the rear, having brought down their game with less expenditure of lead, knowing exactly the right spot where a wound would be fatal.

"That's a fair lot of meat," Abe said, as they gathered into a group. "That will last 'em a long time. Now, if we had been Injins, we should have gone on shooting and shooting till we had killed a score or more, and then taken just the best bits, and left the rest for the coyotes; but I call it downright wicked to waste meat. Kill what you want—that's natural and right; but I am agin drawing a bead on an animal, whether he be buffalo or deer, or what-not, onless you want his meat, or onless his hide be of value to you. If men acted on that thar rule there would be game on these plains for any time; it's willful destruction as is clearing 'em out, not fair hunting.

"Now we will ride off and stop the teams as they come

along and bring 'em round here. It won't be so very far out of thar way. We can stop a couple of days to cut up and dry the meat. The rest will do the cattle good, and there's nothing like having a supply of dried meat; I don't say it's as toothsome as fresh, but it ain't ter be despised, and the time may come, in fact it's pretty sure to come, when we shan't be able to do much hunting round the wagons. We are getting nigh the country where we may expect to meet with Injin troubles. It's just as well we met with this herd afore we got thar, for we should have been pretty sure to find a party of them hanging on the rear of the buffalo."

Three hours later the wagons arrived at the spot, the emigrants in high spirits at the news that such an abundant supply of meat had been procured. The hunters skinned and cut up the five buffaloes; the wagons were placed some fifteen yards apart, and several cords stretched tightly between them; upon these was hung the flesh, which was cut in strips some four inches wide and half an inch thick. By the end of the third day the whole of the meat was dried by the united action of the sun and wind. The skins had been pegged out in the sun, and some of the boys, under Abe's instructions, roughly cured them, first scraping them inside, and then rubbing them with fat mixed with salt.

"It's a rough way," Abe said, "and the Injin women would laugh to see it; they just rub and rub at them till they get them as soft and pliable as the leather they make gloves of east. Still, they will keep as they are, and will do to chuck in the bottom of the wagons for the women and children to sit upon; besides, we shall find it cold at night as we get on, and a buffalo-robe ain't to be despised, even if it ain't dressed to perfection. When they dry and get stiff the boys can take another rub at 'em when we halts; it will give them something to do, and keep them out of mischief."

"Talking of buffalo," Abe began, as the hunters were sitting round the fire on the evening of the hunt, "that reminds me that it wasn't so very far from this har spot that me and Rube was nearly wiped out by the Utes some ten years ago. Rube, he was a young chap then, and had not been long out on the plains. We war hunting with a party of Cheyennes, and had been with them well-nigh all the summer. One day we war in pursuit of buffalo—they were plentiful then; you think they are plentiful now, but you would see ten herds then for every one you see now. But they are going, and I expect in another twenty years that a man might ride across the plains and never catch sight of a hump. If the gold turns out to be as rich as they say, there will be hundreds of thousands of people cross these plains, and, like enough, settlements be formed right across the continent. However, there war plenty of herds ten years ago.

"We had come upon a big herd, and was chasing them. I had singled out an old bull, and had pushed right into the herd after him; Rube, he was pretty close to me. Well, I came up to the bull, and put a rifle-ball between his ribs. The herd had rather separated as we got amongst them, making way for us right and left as we rode after the bull. As he fell we reined in our horses, and looked round. Not a Cheyenne was to be seen; five minutes afore they had been hanging on the herd, sending their arrows in up to the feather among the buffalo; now not a soul was to be seen. You may guess this staggered me and I says to Rube, 'Look out, Rube, there's something up, as sure as fate.'

"Well, I had scarcely spoken afore I saw a big party of Injins come charging down across our rear. 'Utes,' says I, 'by thunder! They are after the Cheyennes! Fling yourself flat on your horse, Rube, and get into the herd.'

"The buffalo war only fifty yards away yet, and yer may

be sure we spurred up pretty sharp till we got up to them. I seed at once it was our only chance. Our horses war blowed, for we had had a sharp chase afore we caught the herd, and there was no chance of our getting away from the Utes in the open plains. We soon caught up the herd, and charged in among them. The brutes were packed so close together that they could hardly make room for us, but we managed to wedge ourselves in. Those next to us snuffed and roared, but they war too pressed by those behind to do much; but by shouting and waving our hats we managed to keep a clear space three or four yards on either side of us. All this time we war lying down on our horses' necks, and there war no fear that any one would see us in the midst of that sea of tossing cattle; but I war afraid they would have caught sight of us afore we got among 'em. I cussed myself for having fired that last shot; they must have heard it, and would have known that some of us hadn't seen them coming, and must be somewhere among the herd.

"I raised my head a little at last, and took a look round. Sure enough, there was a dozen Utes coming up behind the herd. I puts spurs again into my horse, and, catching up an old bull in front of me, progged him with my bowie-knife, and Rube did the same to the beast next to him. They gave a roar and plunged on ahead through the mass, and we followed close to their heels. It was tight work, I can tell you, for the buffaloes on both sides war touching one another. We kept going about half a length behind the beasts next to us, so that the horses' shoulders war just behind the shoulders of the buffaloes; as you know, the buffaloes have got no necks to speak of, and so, although they gave savage thrusts with their horns, they couldn't get at the horses. Our beasts were frightened near out of their lives, but they war well broken, and we managed to keep 'em in hand.

"The thing I was most afraid of was that they would be knocked off their legs, and in that case we should be trampled to death in a minute. As I leaned forward I kept one hand fixed on the neck of the buffalo next me, and I shouted to Rube to do the same, so as we could make a shift to jump on to the buffalo's back if our horses fell; but, I tell you, I was beginning to fear that we shouldn't see any way out of it. What with us in the middle, and the Utes yelling behind them, the herd war fairly mad with fright; and there war no saying where they would go to, for, you know, a herd of buffaloes, when fairly stampeded, will go clean over a precipice a hundred yards high, and pile themselves up dead at the foot till there is not one left. It war a bad fix, you bet, for I war sure that the Utes war after us, and not after the buffaloes, for they kept on, though they could soon have killed as many of the herd as they wanted. It was maybe four in the afternoon when the chase commenced, and so it went on till it was dark. The buffaloes war going nigh as fast as when we started, but the horses could scarce keep their legs; I was sure they couldn't run much longer, so I says to Rube, 'We must get out of this, or else we shall be done for.'

"So we sets to work a-probing the buffalo with our knives again. They started on ahead as hard as they could, bursting a way through the crowd. We followed close behind them, keeping up the scare until we finds ourselves in front of the herd; then we spurred our horses on, and dashed out in front. Done as the horses were, they knew they had got to go, for, with the herd coming like thunder upon their heels, it was death to stop. We swerved away to the right, but it took us half an hour afore we war clear of the front of the herd. We went a few hundred yards further, and then drew rein.

"Rube's horse fell dead as he stopped, and mine wasn't worth much more. For half an hour we could hear the

herd rushing along, and then it had passed. We had got out of our biggest fix, but it warn't a pleasant position.

"There we war out on the plains, with only one horse between us, and he so done up that he couldn't put one foot afore the other.

"Where the Cheyennes war there was no saying; the band might have been wiped out by the Utes, or they might have got away. At any rate there was no counting on them. The Utes who had followed the herd would be sure to be on our trail in the morning; they would follow all night, or as long as the herd ran. When the buffalo war fairly tired out they would lay down, and the Utes would see then as we warn't there. Then they would set out upon the back-trail, skirting along each side of the line trampled by the herd until they came upon our trail; the dead horse was a sign as they could see a mile away, so it was clear that we must foot it as soon as we could. We gave the horse an hour's rest; and it did us as much good as him, for I can tell you we war pretty well used up. We drove him afore us until, after six hours' walking, we came to a stream. We went up this for an hour, then we both filled our hunting-shirts with stones and fastened them on the horse, and then drove him off."

"What did you put the stones on his back for?" Frank asked.

"To make the Utes think as he was carrying double. Each of the loads was about the weight of a man, and the horse was so tired that he staggered as he walked; so as they would see his tracks, and wouldn't see ours, they would naturally come to the conclusion as we war both on his back. It warn't likely as the critter would go far before he laid down, perhaps not more than half a mile; but that would do for us. We went back a few hundred yards in the stream, and then struck off across the prairie, the same side as we had come from, taking care to make as little sign as possible.

"The Utes would be riding along by the side of the stream and looking for a horse's print, and the chances war that they wouldn't see ours. When they came up to the horse and found out the trick, they would gallop back again; at least half of them would go up the stream and half would take the back-track; but, you see, as they went up they would have trampled across our track, and they would find it mighty hard work to pick it up again.

"We footed it all day, and the prospect warn't a pleasant one. The nearest settlement was nigh a thousand miles away, we had no horses, and we daren't fire a gun for fear of bringing Utes down upon us. We had made up our minds to strike for the Cheyennes' country, that being the nearest where we could expect to find friends. For two days we tramped on. The third day we war sitting by the side of a stream, eating a prairie-dog as we had trapped, when Rube stopped eating suddenly, and said, 'Listen!'

"I threw myself down and put my ear to the ground, and, sure enough, could hear the gallop of horses. 'Injins,' says I, and chucks a lot of wet sand and gravel over the fire, which was fortunately a small one. I knew, in course, if they came close that way, as they would see it; but if they passed at some distance they would not notice us. Then Rube and I bounded into the water, and laid down close under a high bank, where the grass grew long, and drooped over to the water so as to cover our heads.

"We heard the redskins coming nearer and nearer, and they stopped at the stream a quarter of a mile or so above us. We listened, I can tell you, for the sound of their going on again; but no such luck, and after a quarter of an hour we knew as they were going to camp there. I felt pretty thankful as it was late in the afternoon, for I guessed in the first place, as they would light their fire and cook their food, so none of them war likely to be coming down our way until it was after dark.

"We waited and waited, till it got quite dark; then we followed the stream down for another four or five miles, and then took to the plains again. It was another three days afore we fell in with a party of Cheyennes. It seemed as how most of those we had been with had been killed by the Utes; the others had taken the news home, and the whole tribe had been turned out. We war pretty well done up, but the chief dismounted two of his men and put us on their horses, and we set off at once. We knew pretty well the line that the party as was following us had taken, and the next night we saw the fires of their camp, and you bet not one of them went home to tell the tale."

"That was a narrow escape indeed, Abe," Frank said.

"It war all that. It war lucky that it war late afore the hunt began; if it had been early in the day nothing could have saved us—onless, of course, our horses had been fresh, and faster than those of the Utes, and then we should have made straight away instead of getting into the herd."

"They don't seem to go as fast as a horse, Abe. I seemed to keep up quite easily with that bull I shot."

"Yes, for a burst a horse is faster than a buffalo, but when they once gets going on a downright stampede they will tire out any horse and go well-nigh as fast too. I tell you you have to be pretty spry, even if you are well-mounted, when a downright big herd, well on the stampede, comes on you. It's a terrible sight, and it makes one tingle, I can tell you, especially as the horse is pretty nigh mad with fear."

"It must be as bad as a prairie fire."

"Worse, my lad; ever so much worse. You can see a prairie fire fifty miles away—more nor that at night, ever so much—and you have plenty of time to set the grass afire ahead of you, and clear the ground afore it comes up, though it does travel, when the wind is blowing, much faster than a horse can gallop. I have seen it go thirty

miles an hour, the flames just leaping out ahead of it and setting grass alight a hundred yards before the main body of the fire came up. I tell you it is a terrible sight when the grass has just dried, and is breast-high; but, as I say, there ain't no cause to be afraid if you do but keep your head. You just pulls up a band of grass a couple of feet wide, and lights it ahead of you; the wind naturally takes it away from you, and you look sharp with blanket or leggings to beat it down, and prevent it working back agin the wind across the bit of ground you have stripped. As it goes it widens out right and left, and you have soon got a wide strip cleared in front of you. In course you don't go on to it as long as you can help it, not till you are drove by the other fire coming up; that gives it time to cool a bit. If you must go on soon, owing to being pressed, or from the fire you have lit working round agin the wind—as it will do if the grass is very dry—the best plan is to cut up your leggings or any bit of hide you have got with you, the rawer the better, and wrap them round your horse's feet and legs; but it ain't often necessary to do that, as it don't take long for the ashes to cool enough so as to stand on."

Fortunately a bottom with good grass had been found close at hand to the place where they encamped, and when the caravan proceeded the draft oxen were all the better for their two days' rest.

"We shall have to begin to look out pretty sharp for Injin signs," Abe said, as they started early next morning. "Fresh meat is good, but we can do without it; there's enough pork and jerked meat in the wagons to last pretty nigh across the plains; but we are getting where we may expect Injins in earnest. We might, in course, have met 'em anywhere, but as they know the caravans have all got to come across their ground, it don't stand to reason as they would take the trouble to travel very far east to meet

'em. I don't say as we won't knock down a stag, now and agin, if we comes across 'em, but the less firing the better. We have been hunting up till now, but we must calculate that for the rest of the journey we are going to be hunted; and if we don't want our scalps taken, not to talk of all these women and children, we have got to look out pretty spry. I reckon we can beat them off in anything like a fair fight—that is, provided we have got time to get ready before they are on us, and it depends on us whether we do have time or not."

CHAPTER XI.

HOW DICK LOST HIS SCALP.

Two or three days after they had moved from their last halting-place, when they were sitting at the fire one evening, and Abe had been telling a yarn of adventure, he said, when he had finished:

"About the closest thing as I know was that adventure that Dick thar had. Dick, take off that thar wig of yourn."

The hunter put his hand to his head and lifted at once his cap, made of skin, and the hair beneath it, showing, to Frank's astonishment, a head without a vestige of hair, and presenting the appearance of a strange scar, mottled with a deep purple, as if it was the result of a terrible burn.

"You see I have been scalped," the hunter said. "I don't suppose you noticed it—few people do. You see, I never takes off my fur cap night or day, so that no one can see as I wears a wig."

"There's naught to be ashamed of in it," Abe said, "for it is as honorable a scalp as ever a man got. Do you tell the story, Dick."

"You know it as well as I do," the hunter replied, "and I ain't good at talking."

"Well, I will tell you it then," Abe said, "seeing that I knows almost as much about it as Dick does. The affair occurred the very year after what I have been telling you about. Dick was attached as hunter and scout to Fort

Charles, which, was, at that time, one of the furthest west of all our stations. There was fifty infantry and thirty cavalry there, and little enough too, for it war just on the edge of the Dakota country. The Dakotas are a powerful tribe, and are one of the most restless, troublesome lots I knows. Several strong parties of our troops have been surprised and cut to pieces by them; and as to settlements, no one but a born fool would dream of settling within reach of them.

"I never could quite make out why we wanted to put a fort down so close to them, seeing as there warn't a settlement to protect within a hundred and fifty miles; but I suppose the wiseacres at Washington had some sort of an idea that the redskins would be afraid to make excursions to the settlements with this fort in their rear, just as if they couldn't make a sweep of five hundred miles if they took it into their heads, and come back into their country on the other side.

"Just at that time there was no trouble with them; the hatchet was buried, and they used to come into the fort and sell skins and furs to the traders there for tobacco and beads. After that affair I was telling ye of, Rube and me, we went back for a spell to the settlement, and then took a fancy to hunt on another line, and, after knocking about for a time, found ourselves at Fort Charles. That was where we met Dick for the first time.

"The commander of the fort was a chap named White, a captain; he had with him his wife and daughter. A worse kind of man for the commander of a frontier station you could hardly find. He was not a bad soldier, and was well liked by his men, and I have no doubt if he had been fighting agin other white men he would have done well enough; but he never seemed to have an idee what Injin nature was like, and weren't never likely to learn.

"First place, he despised them. Now, you know, the

redskins ain't to be despised. You may hate them, you may say they are a cussed lot of rascals and thieves, but there ain't no despising them, and any one as does that is sure to have cause to repent it, sooner or later. There was the less reason with the Dakotas, for they had cut up stronger bodies of troops than there was at Fort Charles without letting a soul escape. Then, partly because the captain despised them, I suppose, he was always hurting their feelings.

"Now, a chief is a chief, and a man who can bring three hundred horsemen into the field, whether he is redskin or white, is a man to whom a certain respect should be paid. But Captain White never seemed to see that, but just treated one redskin like another, just as if they war dirt beneath his feet. Well, as I told you, he had with him his wife and daughter. His wife was too fine a lady for a frontier fort, still, she was not badly liked; but as to the daughter, there warn't a man in the fort but would have died for her. She war about fifteen year old, and as pretty as a flower. She war always bright and merry, with a kind word to the soldiers as she rode past them on her pretty white mustang.

"Dick, here, he worshiped her like the rest of us. If he got a particular good skin, or anything else, if he thought she would like it he would put it by for her, and she used, in her merry way, to call him her scout. Well, one day Black Dog, one of the most powerful chiefs of the Dakotas, rode into the fort with twenty of his braves. Just as he came in, Queen May, as we all called her, came galloping up on her mustang, and leaped like a bird from her saddle at the door of the commander's house, where her father was standing. I war standing next to him, and so I saw Black Dog's eye fall on her, and as long as she stood talking there to her father he never took it off; then he said something to the brave as was sitting on his horse next to him.

"'Cuss him!' Dick said to me, and I could see his hold on his rifle tighten, 'what does he look at Queen May like that for? You mark my words, Abe, trouble will come of this.'

"It was not long before trouble did come, for half an hour later the Dakota rode out of the fort with his men in great wrath, complaining that Captain White had not received him as a chief, and that his dignity was insulted. It war like enough that Captain White was not as ceremonious as he should have been to a great chief—for, as I told you, he war short in his ways with the redskins—but I question if harm would have come of it if it hadn't been that Black Dog's eye fell on that gal.

"I believe that there and then he made up his mind to carry her off. We didn't see any redskins in camp for some time; and then rumors were brought in by the scouts that there war going to be trouble with them, that a council had been held, and that it war decided the hatchet should be dug up again. Captain White he made light of the affair; but he was a good soldier, and warn't to be caught napping, so extra sentries were put on.

"As Rube and me didn't belong to the fort, of course we war independent, and went away hunting, and would sometimes be away for weeks together. One day, when we war some forty miles from the fort, we came upon the trail of a large number of redskins going east. We guessed as there must be nigh two hundred of them. They might, in course, have been going hunting, but we didn't think as it were so; sartainly they had no women with them, and they had been traveling fast. We guessed the trail was three days old, and we thought we had best push on straight to the fort to let them know about it.

"When we got thar we found we were too late. On the morning of the day after we had started a scout had arrived with the news that a strong war-party of Dakotas were on

their way to the settlements. Captain White at once mounted half his infantry on horses, and with them and the cavalry set out in pursuit, leaving the fort in charge of a young officer with twenty-four men. Just after nightfall there was a sound of horsemen approaching, and the officer, thinking it was the captain returning, ordered the gate of the stockade to be left open. In a moment the place was full of redskins. The soldiers tried to fight, but it were no use; all war cut down, only one man making his escape in the darkness.

"At daybreak, the captain, with his troops, rode into the fort. Dick, who had been with him, had, when the party was returning, gone out scouting on his own account, and had come across the back-track of the redskins. The moment he had brought in the news the horses were re-saddled again, and the party started back; but they had gone nearly sixty miles the day before, and it was not until morning that, utterly exhausted and weary, they got within sight of the fort. Then they saw as it war too late.

"Not a roof was to be seen above the stockade, and a light smoke rising everywhere showed as fire had done it. They rode into camp like madmen. There lay all their comrades, killed and scalped; there were the bodies of Mrs. White and her servants, and the nigger laborers, and the trader and his clerks, and of all who had been left behind in the camp, except the captain's little daughter; of her there weren't no signs. Rube and me arrived half an hour later, just as the soldier who had escaped had come in and was telling how it all came about.

"It war a terrible scene, I can tell you; the captain he were nigh mad with grief, and the men were boiling over with rage. If they could have got at the Dakotas then they would have fought if there had been twenty to one against them. Dick war nowhere to be seen; the man said that he had caught a fresh horse, which had broken its

rope and stampeded through the gate while the massacre was going on, and that he had ridden away on it on the Indian trail.

"If the horses had been fresh the captain would have started in pursuit at once, and every man was burning to go. But it was lucky as they couldn't, for if they had I have no doubt the whole lot would have been wiped out by the Dakotas. However, there was no possibility of moving for at least a couple of days, for the horses war altogether used up after the march. So they had time to get cool on it.

"That afternoon the captain, who was in council with the two officers who remained, sent for Rube and me, and asked us our opinion as to what was best to be done. We says at once that there weren't nothing. 'You have lost nigh a third of your force,' says I, 'and have got little over forty left. If we were to go up into the Dakota country we should get ambushed to a certainty, and should have a thousand of them, perhaps two thousand, down on us, and the odds would be too great, captain; it couldn't be done. Besides, even if you licked them—and I tell you as your chance of doing so would be mighty small—they would disperse in all directions, and then meet and fight you agin, and ye wouldn't be no nearer getting your daughter than you war before.

"'If you ask my advice, it would be that you should send back to the nearest fort for more men, and that you should at once get up the stockade where it has been burned down, for there is no saying when you will be attacked again. I tell you, captain, that to lead this party here into the Dakota country would mean sartin death for them.'

"Mad as the captain was to go in search of his daughter, he saw that I was right, and indeed I concluded he had made up his mind he could do nothing before he sent for

us, only he hoped, I suppose, as we might give some sort of hope. 'I am afraid what you say is true,' says he. 'At any rate we must wait till Dick, the scout, returns; he will tell us which way they have gone, and what is their strength.'

"By nightfall the soldiers had buried all the dead just outside the stockade, and had built a temporary wall—for there wasn't a stick of timber within miles—across the gaps in the fence.

"At nightfall Rube and me, whose horses war fresh, started for the nearest fort, and four days afterward got back with forty more horse-soldiers. We found that Dick had not come back, and we made up our minds as he had gone under. When we were away we had heard that the redskins had attacked the settlements in a dozen different places, and that there was no doubt a general Injin war had broken out. The officer at the fort where I went to was a major; it was a bigger place than Fort Charles, which was a sort of outlying post. I had, in course, told him about the captain's daughter being carried off.

"He sent up a letter with the soldiers to the captain, saying how sorry he was to hear of his loss, and he sent up forty men; but he ordered that unless Captain White had received some intelligence which would, in his opinion, justify his undertaking an expedition into the Indian country with so small a force as he could command, he was at once to evacuate the place and fall back with his force on the settlement, as the position was quite untenable, and every man was needed for the defense of the settlers.

"When the captain got the order he walked up and down by hisself for four or five minutes. Yer see it war a hard choice for him; as a father he was longing to go in search of his child, as a soldier he saw that he should be risking the whole force under his command if he did so,

and that at a time when every man was needed at the settlements. At last the order was given that the troops should take the back-track to the settlements on the following evening.

"The captain told the officers that he should wait till then to give the horses of the men who had arrived with us time to rest; but I know in his heart he wanted to wait in the hope of Dick arriving with news.

"The next day, at four in the afternoon, the men war beginning to saddle their horses, when the sentry suddenly gave the cry of 'Injins, Injins!'

"In a moment every man seized his carbine and sword, and shoved his bridle on his horse's head, buckled up, and jumped into the saddle. There was no occasion for any orders. I climbed up on to the stockade, for the country was pretty nigh a dead flat, and the lookout had been burned with the huts.

"Sure enough, there in the distance war some horsemen coming across the plain; but they war straggling, and not many of them. I could not make head nor tail of it. They war Injins, sure enough, for even at that distance I could tell that by their figures. Then I saw as there was more of them coming behind them; the idea suddenly struck me: 'Ride, captain!' I shouted; 'ride with your men for your life, they are chasing some one.'

"There warn't any necessity for Captain White to give any orders; there was a rush to the gate, and as fast as they could get through they started out at full gallop. Me and Rube dropped over the stockade, for our critters war picketed outside. We didn't wait to saddle them, you may guess, but pulled up the ropes, jumped on to their backs, and galloped on; and we war soon by the side of Captain White, who was riding as if he was mad. We could see them a little plainer now, and says I, suddenly, 'Captain, there is a white horse in front, by gum!'

"A sort of hoarse cry came from the captain, and he spurred his horse agin, although the critter was going at its best speed. They war two miles from us yet, but I could soon make out as the white horse and another was a bit ahead, then came eight or ten Injins in a clump, and a hundred or more straggling out behind. It seemed to me as they war all going slow, as if the horses war dead beat; but what scared me most was to see as the clump of Injins war gaining on the two ahead of them, one of whom I felt sure now was the captain's daughter, and the other I guessed was Dick.

"The captain saw it too, for he gave a strange sort of cry. 'My God!' he said, 'they will overtake her.' We war still a mile from them, when we saw suddenly the man in front—this chap Dick here—part sudden from the white horse, wheel straight round, and go right back at the Injins. They separated as he came to them. We saw two fall from their horses, and the wind presently brought the sound of the cracks of pistols. There war no 'Colts,' in those days, but I knew that Dick carried a brace of double-barreled pistols in his holsters. Then the others closed round him.

"There was a sort of confusion; we could see tomahawks waving, and blows given, and when it was over there war but four Injins out of the eight to be seen on their horses. But the white horse had gained a hundred yards while the fight was going on, and the Injins saw that we war a-coming on like a hurricane, so they turned their horses and galloped back again.

"Three minutes later the captain's daughter rode up. She war as white as death, and the captain had just time to leap off and catch her as she fainted dead away. The rest of us didn't stop, you bet; we just gave a cheer and on we went, and the Dakotas got a lesson that day as they will remember as long as they are a tribe. Their horses

were so dead beat they had scarcely a gallop in them, while ours were fresh, and I don't think ten of the varmints got away.

"We didn't draw rein till it was dark, and next morning we counted two hundred and fifteen dead redskins on the plains. The first thing in the morning, Rube and me rode back to where the fight began, to give Dick a burial. We looked about, but couldn't find him. There was Black Dog, with one of his bullets through his forehead, two others shot through the body, and one with his skull stove in with a blow from Dick's rifle, which was lying there with the stock broken. So we supposed the captain had had him carried to the fort, and we rode on there.

"When we got there we found as he was alive. It seems at the moment the captain's daughter recovered from her faint she insisted on going back with the captain to see if Dick was alive. They found him well-nigh dead. He had got an arrow through the body, and two desperate clips with tomahawks, and had been scalped, but he was still breathing. There war no one else nigh, for every man had ridden on in pursuit; but they managed, somehow, between them, to get him upon the captain's horse. The captain he rode in the saddle and held him in his arms, while his daughter led her horse back to the fort. There they dressed his wounds, and put wet cloths to his head, and watched him all night.

"In the morning he was quite delirious. Fortunately the captain considered that after the way they had licked the redskins the day before there was no absolute necessity for evacuating the fort; so the troops cut turf and made huts, and parties were sent off to the nearest timber to bring in boughs for roofs, and there we stopped, and in six weeks Dick was about again with his wig on his head.

"You will wonder whar he got his wig from, seeing as that sort of thing ain't a product of the plains; but he is

wearing his own hair. Among the fust of the Injins we overtook and killed was a chap with Dick's scalp hanging at his girdle, and when it was known as he was alive they searched and found it; and one of the soldiers who was fond of collecting bird-skins, and such like, just preserved it in the same way, and when Dick was able to go out again he presented him with his own scalp. So if any one says to Dick as he ain't wearing his own hair, Dick can tell him he is a liar.

"Lor', how grateful that gal was to Dick; he never was a particular good-looking young fellow, and he wasn't improved by the scrimmage, but I believe if he had axed her she would have given up everything and settled down as a hunter's wife."

Dick growled an angry denial.

"Well, mate, it may be not quite that, but it war very nigh it. It was downright pretty to see the way she hung about him, and looked after him, just for all the world as if she had been his mother, and he a sick child. The captain, too, didn't know how to make enough of Dick; and as for the men, they would have done anything for him for having saved the life of Queen May. I heard, three or four years afterward, as she married the young officer who was in command of the horse-soldiers at the next fort."

"But tell me," Frank said, "how did Dick manage to get her away from the Indians?"

"That," Abe said, "he'd better tell you himself, seeing as concerning that part of the business he knows more nor I do. Now, Dick, speak out."

"There ain't much to tell," Dick said gruffly, taking the pipe from his mouth. "Directly as we got back to camp, and I found she had gone, it seemed to me as I had got to follow her; and my eye lighting on the loose horse, I soon managed to catch the critter, and, shifting my saddle to it, I started. As you may guess, there war no diffi-

culty in following the trail. They had ridden all night, though they knew there was no chance of their being pursued. But about fifty miles from the fort I came upon their first halting-place; they had lit fires and cooked food there, and had waited some hours.

"The ashes were still warm, and I guess they had left about four hours afore I arrived; so I went on more carefully, knowing that if I threw away my life there was no chance of recovering the gal. I guessed, by the direction which they were taking, they were going to Black Dog's village; and, after going a bit further on the trail to make sure, I turned off, and went round some miles, in case they should have left any one to see if they war followed. I knew where the village was, for I had been hunting near it.

"I camped out on the plains for the night, and next day rode to within five miles of the village, which was among the hills. I left my horse in a wood where there was water, and taking my rifle and pistols went forward on foot to the village and arrived there after dark. As I expected, I found the hull place astir. A big fire was blazing in the center; on a pole near it hung the scalps they had taken, and they were a-dancing round it and howling and yelling. I didn't see any signs of the gal; but as there were two redskins with their rifles hanging about the door of a wigwam next to that of the chief, I had no doubt she was there.

"This wigwam was in the center of the village, and there were lots of old squaws and gals about, so that I could not, for the life of me, see any way of stealing her out. Next night I went back to the camp and watched, but the more I thought on it, the more difficult it seemed. The second night I catched an Injin boy who was wandering outside the camp. I choked him, so that he couldn't hollo, and carried him off; and when I got far enough away I questioned him, and found that in two days there was to be a

grand feast, and Black Dog was then going to take the white gal as his squaw. So I saw as there was no time to be lost. I strapped up the Indian boy and tied him to a tree, and then went back to the village.

"This time the gal was sitting at the door of the tent. I crept up behind, cut a slit in the skins, and got inside. As I expected, there was no one in there, the squaws as was watching her was outside; so I crept up close to the entrance, and I says to her, 'Hush! don't move, your scout Dick is here.' She gave a little tremble when I began, and then sat as still as a mouse.

"Says I, 'I don't see no plan for getting you away secret, you are watched altogether too close, the only plan is to make a race for it. There ain't many horses on the plain as can beat that mustang of yours, and I know you can ride him barebacked. Do you take a head of maize now, and walk across to where he is picketed, and feed and pat him; then to-morrow morning early do the same. They won't be watching very closely, for they will think you are only going to do the same as to-night. I have put an open knife down behind you. You cut his rope, jump on his back, and ride straight; I will join you at the bottom of the valley. They may overtake us, but they won't hurt you; if they do catch you, they will just bring you back here again, and you will be no worse off than you are now. Will you try?' The gal nodded, and I crept away out of sight.

"A few minutes afterward I saw her going along with some ears of maize to where the horses were tied up. Two Indians followed her at a little distance, but she walked across so natural that I don't think they had any suspicion; she fed the horse, and talked to it, and petted it, and then went back to the village. Next morning before daylight, I mounted my horse and rode to the mouth of the valley, a quarter of a mile from the village.

"Half an hour after daylight I heard a yell, and almost directly afterward the sounds of a horse's hoofs in full gallop. I rode out, and along she came as hard as the horse could go. Three or four mounted Indians war just coming into the other end of the valley four hundred yards away.

"'All right, Queen May, we have got a fine start,' says I, and then we galloped along together. 'Not too fast,' I told her, 'it ain't speed as will win the race. There is a long hundred miles between us and the fort. We must keep ahead of them varmints for a mile or two, and then they will settle down.'

"For the first five or six miles we had to ride fast, for the redskins tried the speed of their horses to the utmost; but none of them gained anything on us, indeed we widened the gap by a good bit. You see at first they only thought it was a wild scheme on the part of the gal, and the first as started jumped on the first horses that came to hand; it wasn't till they saw me that they found it was a got-up thing. One of the first lot galloped back with the news. But by the time the alarm was spread, and the chase really taken up in earnest, we was a good mile away, and a mile is a long start.

"Black Dog and some of his best-mounted braves rode too hard at first. Ef we had only had a short start they would have catched us, perhaps; but a mile's start was too much to be made up by a rush, and so Black Dog should have known; but I reckon he was too mad at first to calculate. By hard riding he and his best-mounted braves got within half a mile of us when we war about ten miles from the village. But by that time, as you may guess, the steam was out of their horses, while we had been riding at a steady gallop.

"The first party that had started had now tailed away, and was as far back as the chief. It was safe to be a long

chase now, and I felt pretty sure as the gal would escape, for her mustang was a beautiful critter, and the captain had given a long price for it; besides, it was carrying no weight to speak of. I didn't feel so sure about myself, for though my horse was a first-class one, and had over and over again, when out hunting, showed herself as fast as any out, there might be as good ones or better among the redskins, for anything I knew. When we were fairly out on the plains, I could see that pretty nigh the whole tribe of redskins had joined in the chase.

"At first I couldn't make out why; for although they are all wonderful for bottom, some of the redskins' horses ain't much for speed, and many of them could never have hoped to have come up with us. But when I thought it over, I reckoned that seeing I had joined the gal, they might have thought that I had brought her news that the captain, with all the soldiers from the fort, was coming up behind, and I expect that's why the chief and his braves rode so fast at first.

"I don't know as I ever passed a longer day than that. We went at a steady gallop, always keeping just about half a mile ahead of the redskins. Sometimes I jumped off my horse and ran alongside of him with my hand on the saddle for half a mile, to ease him a bit. The gal rode splendidly; the mustang had a beautiful easy pace, and she set him as if she was in a chair. For the first fifty miles I don't think the redskins gained a yard on us; they warn't pressing their horses more than we were, for it was a question only of last now. Then little by little I could see that a small party was leaving the rest and gaining slowly upon us; I darn't press my horse further, but I began to give the gal instructions as to the course she should keep.

"'What does it matter, Dick,' she asked, 'when you are here to guide me?' 'But I mayn't be with you all the time,' says I; 'it air quite possible that them redskins will

overtake me twenty miles afore I get to the fort, but your critter can keep ahead of them easy, he is going nigh as light now as when he started; when they get a bit closer to us you must go on alone.' 'I shan't leave you,' she says. 'Dick, you got into this scrape to save me, and I am not going to run away and leave you to be killed; if you are taken, I will be taken too.'

"'That would be a foolish thing,' says I,' and a cruel one, ef you like to put it so. I have risked my life to save you, just as I have risked it a score of times before on the plains; ef my time has come, it will be a comfort to me to know as I have saved you, but ef you were taken too I should feel that I had just chucked my life away. Besides, you have got to think of the captain; now that your mother has gone you have got to be a comfort to him. So you see, miss, ef you was to get taken willful you would be doing a bad turn to yerself, and to me, and to yer father.'

"It was a long time before she spoke again, and then she didn't say anything about what we had been talking of, but began to ask whether I thought we were sure to find the soldiers still at the fort. In course I couldn't say for sartin, but, to cheer her up, I talked hopeful about it, though I thought it was likely enough they had fallen back on the settlements. I did some long spells of running now, and got more hopeful, for the Injins didn't gain anything to speak of.

"We war all going very slow now, for the horses were pretty nigh beat. We had crossed two or three streams by the way, and at each they had had a few mouthfuls of water. It wasn't till we were within ten miles of the fort that the Injins really began to gain. They must have felt that there was a good chance of our slipping through their fingers, and they determined to catch us if they killed every horse in the tribe.

"I tried to urge my critter forward, but he hadn't got it in him; and what frightened me more was that the mustang didn't seem much faster; he had trod in a dog-hole when we war about halfway across the plains, and must have twisted his foot. I could see now he was going a little lame with it. The redskins gained on us bit by bit, and were pressing us hard when first we caught sight of the fort about four miles away.

"I had begun to despair, for they warn't more than two hundred yards behind now. The gal had held on bravely, but she was nigh done. Good rider as she was, it was a terrible ride for a young gal, and it was only the excitement which kept her going; but she was nigh reeling on the horse now. Sudden I says to her, 'Thank God! Miss, there are the soldiers; keep up your heart, your father's coming to save you.'

"The Injins saw him too, for I heard the war whoop behind, and the sound of the horses came nearer and nearer. I spurred my horse, and it was the first time I had touched him since we started, but it wasn't no good. 'Ride, Queen May, ride for your life!' I cried out; but I don't think she heard me. She was looking straight forward now at the sojers; her face was like death, and with a hard set look on it, and I expected every moment to see her drop from her horse.

"I saw as it was all up; the redskins war but fifty yards behind, and were gainin' fast upon us. So I says, 'Thar's your father, miss, ride on for his sake,' then I turns my horse, and, with a pistol in each hand, I rides back at the redskins. The gal told me afterward that she did not hear me speak, that she didn't know I had turned, and that all that time after she had first caught sight of the sojers seemed a dream to her.

"I don't remember much of the scrimmage. Black Dog was the first redskin I met, and I hit him fair between the

eyes; arter that it was all confusion, I threw away my pistols, and went at them with my rifle. I felt as if a hot iron went through my body, then there was a crash on my head, and I remember nothing more until I found myself lying, as weak as a baby, in the hut in the fort, with Queen May a-sitting working beside the bed. So, as you see, it ain't much of a story."

"I call it a great deal of a story," Frank said; "I would give a great deal to have done such a thing."

"Well, shut up, and don't say no more about it," Dick growled, "ef you want us to keep friends. Abe's always a-lugging that old story out, and he knows as I hates it like pizen. We have had more than one quarrel about it, and this is the last time, by gosh, as ever I opens my lips about it. Pass over the liquor, I am dry."

CHAPTER XII.

THE ATTACK ON THE CARAVAN.

ALTHOUGH great uneasiness had been caused by the reports as to the Indians, the members of the caravan were in good spirits. So far the journey had been a success. The difficulties met with in crossing streams and bad bits of ground had been considerable, but were no greater than they had looked for. The animals had preserved their health and condition. The supply of fresh meat had been regular, and all were in excellent health. The rise of ground had been so gradual that it had scarcely been felt; but they were now at a considerable height above the sea, and the brisk clear air braced their nerves, and enabled even the feeblest to stand the fatigue without inconvenience.

One day when Frank was out alone with Dick on the north of the line of march, they came within sight of some buffalo grazing, and Frank was about to set spurs to his horse when his companion suddenly checked him.

"What is it?" Frank said in surprise. "They don't see us, and if we follow that hollow we shall be able to get close to them before they can catch sight of us."

"That's so," Dick said, "but just at present it air a question of something more serious than bufflars, it air a question of Injins."

"Indians!" Frank exclaimed, gazing round in every direction. "Where, Dick? I see no signs of them."

"No, and if you were to look round all day you wouldn't see 'em; they are at your feet."

Frank looked down in surprise.

"I can see nothing," he said, after a minute examination of the ground.

"It's thar, though," Dick said, throwing himself off his horse. "Look at this soft piece of ground; that is a hoof-print, and there is another and another."

Frank also dismounted and examined the ground.

"Yes," he said, "I can see a number of hoof-prints now you point them out. But how do you know that they are Indian prints?"

"Because they are unshod; besides, you see, instead of coming along in a crowd, as a drove of turned loose horses would do, the marks are all together, one after the other, as they came along in single file. There is no doubt they are a party of Indians."

"They are ahead of us," Frank said.

"They were," Dick said, "but thar ain't no saying where they are now; maybe watching us."

The thought was not a comfortable one, and Frank grasped his rifle tightly as he looked round.

"Just stay where you are," Dick said; "we are in a hollow, and I will have a look round."

Dick made his way upon his hand and knees to the top of the brow, choosing a spot where the shrubs grew thickest, and making his way with such caution that Frank could scarcely keep him in sight. When he reached the brow he raised his head and looked round in all directions and then went on. It was nearly half an hour before he rejoined his companion.

"They have gone straight ahead," he said. "I went over the brow, and down the next hollow, and found their trail strong there, for the ground is swampy; they had certainly passed within an hour of the time I got there."

"How did you know that?" Frank asked.

"Because the water was still muddy where they had

passed; it would have settled again in an hour after being disturbed, so they could not have been more than that time ahead. They were keeping just parallel with the line of march of the caravan."

"How many of them do you think there were?"

"Between fifty and sixty," Dick said confidently.

"Perhaps they were merely journeying quietly along," Frank suggested.

"Not likely," Dick replied; "they must have seen these bufflars, and would have been after them, almost to a sartinty, had they not had other business on hand. No, I expect they were watching the caravan and had made up their minds to wait till nightfall, or perhaps till it came to some place where they can get up close without being seen, and fall upon it by surprise. We will ride back at once with the news, and put them on their guard."

An hour's riding brought them to the caravan, where their news created a great sensation. Hitherto the danger from Indians had appeared a remote trouble, which might not, after all, befall them. The news that fifty or sixty of these dreaded foes were marching along, almost within sight, and might at any moment attack them, brought the danger close indeed. The wagons were driven in even closer order; the women and children were told to keep between the lines; the men distributed themselves among the teams, ready to unyoke the oxen at the shortest notice, and to form the wagons in order of defense. Abe and his companions had not yet returned; but a quarter of an hour later they were seen galloping toward the camp.

"You must keep close together and look spry," Abe shouted as he approached; "we have come upon signs of a large body of Indians, a hundred and fifty or two hundred strong, I reckon, out there on the plains. They have passed along this morning, and ain't up to no good, I expect."

"We have found signs of a smaller party, Abe, some fifty or sixty, on our left; these were marching straight along, pretty well in the line we are going."

"Then," Abe said, "ye had best look to yer guns, for they mean mischief; they must have been watching us this morning when we started, but concluded that the ground was too level, and that we should have time to get into position before they could get up to us, besides we had all the advantage in the stockades at the station. There ain't no station this evening."

"Do you think they will attack us on the road?" Frank asked.

"That will depend on whether they think they can take us unawares. Get on yer horses again. Dick, do you ride half a mile ahead of the caravan, don't keep in the hollows, but follow the line of the brow on the right. Young Frank and I will scout half a mile out on the right of the caravan; Rube and Jim, you go the same distance on the left; that way we can see them coming, and the teamsters will have plenty of time to form up the wagons. But I don't reckon as they will attack; when they sees as we are on the lookout they will guess we have come across their tracks, and will see that their chances of a surprise are gone for the day."

"Do you think they will attack us to-night?" Frank asked his companions.

"They may, and they may not. As a general thing these Plain Injins are not fond of night attacks; it's part superstition, no doubt, and part because they are much more at home on horseback than on foot. Still there's never no saying with an Injin; but I should say, lad, that they ain't likely to do that yet. They will try other ways fust. They knows as how they have got plenty of time, and can choose their opportunity, if it's a month hence. They are wonderful patient, are the redskins, and time air

of no account to them; but at present I think the most dangerous times will be after we have camped and before night comes on, and at daybreak before we makes our start."

Two more days passed quietly, and a feeling of hope pervaded the caravan that the Indians had ridden on and sought for other prey. But Abe assured them that they must not relax their precautions, and that the failure of the Indians to attack was no proof whatever that they had abandoned their intention to do so.

"An Injin is always most dangerous just when you ain't thinking of him. You may be sure we have been watched, although we haven't seen no one, and that seeing as we are on guard they are waiting for us to become careless again; or it may be they have fixed upon their place of attack, and if so, you may bet yer life it is a good one. Above all things you men impress upon the women and children that in case of a sudden attack they shall each take refuge at once in the wagons, in the places allotted to them, and that they shall do it without any squealing or yelling; there's nothing bothers men and flurries them, just as they have got need to be cool and steady, as the yelping of a pack of women. Just impress on them as it does no good, and adds to the chances of their getting their throats cut and their har raised."

The hunter's orders were very strongly impressed upon the women and children, and even the latter were made to feel thoroughly the importance of silence in case of an attack.

Upon the following day they came upon a spot where the trail crossed a deep hollow; the sides were extremely steep, the bottom flat and swampy. Rough attempts had been made by preceding travelers to reduce the steepness of the bank, but it was in no way improved thereby; the upper edge was indeed more gradual, but the soil cut away

there, and shoveled down, had been softened by subsequent rains, while the torn surface of the bottom, and the deep tracks left by the wheels, showed how the teams had struggled through it. They explored for some little distance up and down to see if an easier point for crossing could be discovered, but came to the conclusion that the spot at which the tracks crossed it was the easiest, as in most places the bank had been eaten away by winter rains and was almost perpendicular. They had reached this spot late in the evening, and prepared to cross soon after daybreak.

"You will have to fix up three teams to each wagon," Abe had said, "and take one over at a time. We will be out early scouting—for, mind you, this is a likely place to be attacked by the redskins; they will know there is a bad spot here, and will guess as you will be in confusion and divided, some on one side of the gulch, some on the other. Give particular charge to the men to have their rifles handy, and to prepare to defend the wagons to the last, and pass round word among the women and children not to be scared in case of an attack, as we shall drive the Injins off handsomely if they come."

At daybreak, Abe, Dick, and Frank crossed the gulch, the other two hunters remaining behind.

"We must not go far from the crossing," Abe said. "We don't know which way the tarnal critters may come, and in case of attack, all our guns will be wanted. They will guess as we shall begin to cross the first thing in the morning, and that it will take three or four hours to get over. So, if they are coming, it will be in a couple of hours, so as to catch us divided."

They took their station on a rise a few hundred yards from the crossing, one of them riding back from time to time to see how the operation of crossing was going on. It was one immense difficulty. The oxen were mired almost up to their chests, and the wagons sunk axle-deep. The

wagons stuck fast in spite of the efforts of all the men in the party. Frank looked on for some time, and then a thought struck him.

"Look here, you will never get the wagons on in that way, the oxen cannot pull an ounce. The best way will be to unyoke them, take them across, and get them up on the level ground on the top; then fasten your ropes together and hitch them to the wagon. The bullocks, on firm ground, can easily pull it across."

The suggestion was at once acted upon. The bottom was some fifty yards wide, and there were plenty of ropes in the wagons which had been brought for lowering them down difficult places, and for replacing any of the long rope traces which might be broken and worn out. Two of these were attached to the wagon, and the oxen were taken over and up the further side. A team was attached to each rope, and as the whip cracked the ponderous wagon was at once set in motion, and was soon dragged through the mud and up the incline.

"That's a capital plan of yourn, young fellow," John Little said. "I don't know how we ever should have got across the other way, and I had just made up my mind to give it up and move down this hollow till we came to firmer ground."

Five more wagons were got across in the same manner. Suddenly Abe discharged his rifle.

"What's the matter?" Frank exclaimed.

"Injins," Abe said briefly. "Them's the heads of the tarnal cusses just coming over the line of that rise."

The spot to where he pointed was about half a mile distant, and soon Frank perceived a number of dark objects rising above it. Almost at the same instant the sound of a gun was heard on the other side of the gulch.

"They are going to attack both sides at once," Abe said, as they galloped back toward the crossing; "that shows

they are strong. If they had any doubts about licking us they would have thrown thar whole strength on one party or the other."

On reaching the wagons they found the men there working with all their might to get the six wagons in position, side by side across the top of the ascent. The oxen had already been taken down into the hollow.

"That's right," Abe shouted, as they leaped from their horses and aided in the movement. "It couldn't be better. Well and steady. You have three or four minutes yet."

The wagons were drawn up in two lines with their wheels touching, the inner line being on the very edge of the descent. The women and children were placed in the inner wagons, while the eight men who had come across with them, and the three hunters, took their places in the outside wagons.

Almost all the men had been across with the teams when the guns were fired, but the remainder had run back to aid in the defense of the wagons on the other side. These were already in a position of defense, having been so arranged before the crossing began. So well had Abe's orders been carried out, that no confusion whatever had occurred. At the sound of the guns the women had climbed, and helped the children, into the wagons allotted to them, and the men, on arriving, quietly took up their positions.

The Indians were not visible until they reached a spot about three hundred yards from the wagons. As they dashed up the rise they checked their horses. Instead of seeing, as they had expected, everything in confusion and dismay, not a soul was visible, and the clumps of wagons stood, one on either side, ranged as for defense. However, after waiting for three days for their prey, they were not to be balked. Their wild war-cry rose in the air, and the two bodies of horsemen charged down on the travelers.

In an instant a deadly fire broke out, the men kneeling in the bottom of the wagons and resting their rifles on the rail, the tilt being raised a few inches to enable them to see under it. Every shot told among the mass of horsemen. The emigrants were all new to Indian warfare, but most of them were farmers accustomed from boyhood to the use of the rifle, and the coolness of the hunters, and their preparation for attack, steadied them, and gave them confidence. Several of the Indians fell at the first discharge, but the advance was not checked, and at full speed they came on.

"Steady, lads; don't throw away a shot," Abe shouted, as the men loaded and discharged their rifles as quickly as possible; "see that every bullet tells."

Already the Indians were checking the speed of their horses, for the position was a most difficult one to attack. It could not be surrounded, and, indeed, could only be attacked on the face of the outside wagons, from which a stream of fire was pouring. As the leaders came on Frank and the two hunters, who both, like himself, carried revolvers, laid aside their rifles and brought these deadly weapons into action, resting them on the rail to secure an accurate fire. The quick, sharp cracks of these, followed in almost every case by the fall of one of the horsemen in front, completed the dismay of the Indians. Quick as thought, those who had fallen were lifted across the horses of their comrades, and the whole band, turning, galloped away at full speed, pursued, as long as they were in sight, by the rifle-balls of the defenders of the wagons.

"So much for them," Abe said, as he leaped to the ground. "Now let us give a hand to our comrades."

The fight was still raging on the other side. The number of wagons was larger, and the facilities for defense less. The wagons were surrounded by a throng of Indians, who were cutting at them with their tomahawks, discharg-

ing their rifles into the tilts, and some, having thrown themselves from their horses, were endeavoring to climb up. The defenders were still fighting desperately. They had no longer time to load, but with hatchets and clubbed rifles beat down the Indians who tried to climb the wagons.

A few minutes, however, would have ended the resistance had not help been at hand.

From the opposite side of the gulch eleven men poured the contents of their rifles among the Indians. One of the leading chiefs and four of his followers fell dead, and almost before the Indians had recovered from their surprise a dropping fire was opened, almost every shot taking effect. A cheer broke from the defenders of the wagons, and they fought with renewed hope, while the Indians, startled by this unlooked-for attack, and by the repulse of their comrades, began to lose heart.

Only for a few minutes longer did they continue the attack. The deadly flank fire proved too much for their courage, and soon they too were in full flight, carrying off with them their killed and wounded. A shout of triumph rose from the two parties of whites, and a scene of wild delight took place; the women, now that the excitement was over, cried and laughed alternately in hysterical joy; the children shouted, while the men grasped each other's hands in fervent congratulation.

"We all owe our lives to you and your comrades," John Little said to Abe. "If it had not been for you we should all have gone under; and, I tell you, if ever we get across these plains we will find some way to show our gratitude. As long as John Little has a crust in the world he will share it with you."

When the excitement had somewhat abated, the work of crossing was recommenced, and in two hours all were over and the journey was continued.

"Do you think the Indians will attack us again?" John Little asked Abe, when the caravan was set in motion.

"They will, if they see a chance," Abe replied. "They have lost a lot of men, and will get vengeance if they can. It depends partly whether thar big chief was killed or not; if he war they may give it up now; they sees as we are strong and well-armed. If not, thar chief will do all he can to wipe us out, for he will be held responsible for the affair, and such a defeat would lower his influence in the tribe."

Five days later they saw some wagons in the distance. Since the attack the hunters had not left the caravan, as the emigrants all declared that they would far rather go without fresh meat than have the hunters absent from the camp. A few deer only, which had been seen from the line of march, had been stalked and shot.

"There is a caravan halting ahead," Frank said. "We heard at the last station that one passed ten days back. I wonder what they are halting for. The next water, according to the distances the station-keeper gave us, must be ten miles away."

"I don't like the look of it," Abe replied. "Traveling at about the same rate as we do, they should still be about ten days ahead. I am very much afraid that something has happened; those varmint we thrashed, or some other, may have attacked them."

For another mile not a word was spoken; then they reached a spot from which the wagons and the ground around them was clearly visible.

"I see no sign of movement," Abe said to John Little, "and thar seems to be a lot of dark objects lying about. I will ride forward with my mates. If, as I calculate, there has been a massacre, you had better take the wagons a detour a mile round, so that the women and children may be spared the sight of it. It would be enough to make them skeery for the rest of the journey."

Abe and his comrades galloped forward,

"Have your rifles ready," the former said; "there may be some of the varmint hiding about still, though I don't think it likely. I expect the attack took place some days back."

On nearing the wagons their apprehensions were verified. Around lay the carcasses of the oxen with bales and boxes broken open and rifled of their contents. In and near the wagons were the bodies of their defenders, mingled with those of the women and children. All had been scalped, and the bodies were mutilated with gashes of the tomahawks. No attempt had been made to put the wagons into any position of defense; they still stood in a long line, as they had been traveling when the Indians fell upon them. There were twelve wagons, and they counted eighty bodies lying around them.

"It has been a regular surprise," Abe said, "and I expect there war very little fighting. The Injins burst out on them, there war a wild panic, a few shots war fired, and it war all over; that's how I read it. Hillo! what's that?"

A deep growl was heard, and turning they saw under a bush a mastiff, standing over the body of a child. The animal could with difficulty keep its legs; it had been pierced by a lance, and had received a blow with a tomahawk on the head which had nearly cut off one of its ears. It had doubtless been left for dead, but had recovered itself, and crawled to the side of one of the children of the family to which it belonged. Its head was covered with matted blood, and its tongue hung out, black and parched with thirst; but it growled savagely, its hair bristled on its back, and it prepared to defend to the last the body of its young master.

"Poor fellow!" Frank said, dismounting. "Poor old boy, we are friends."

At the kind tones of the voice the dog relaxed the fierceness of its aspect, it gave a faint whine, and lay down by

the child's body. Frank took off his thick felt hat, filled it with water from the skin hanging from his saddle, and carried it to the dog. The animal raised itself again with an effort, and drank eagerly; when it had finished, it thrust its great nose into Frank's hand and wagged its tail, then it returned to the body and gave a piteous howl. The tears stood in Frank's eyes.

"Lend a hand with your knives," he said to his comrades, who were looking on; "let us dig a grave for the child, then the dog will perhaps follow us; it is a grand dog, and I should like to have it."

The others dismounted, and with their knives and hands they soon scraped a hole in the earth capable of containing the body. The mastiff stood by watching their operations. Frank doubted whether it would allow him to touch the body of the child; but the animal seemed to comprehend his intentions, and suffered him to raise the child and lay it in the ground. No sooner was the grave filled up than the mastiff laid himself down beside it. Frank now offered the animal some meat from his wallet, and after this was eaten, bathed its head with water and brought the edges of the wound together, and bandaged it with a strip torn from his hunting-shirt.

"Come along, old fellow; come along with us, you can do no good here."

He mounted his horse, and the mastiff rose to its feet and stood irresolute, and gave another piteous howl.

"Will you ride back to the caravan, Abe, and tell them there is no danger? I will move slowly with the dog, and join them when they get abreast of us."

The four men started at a gallop. Frank dismounted again and patted the mastiff; then tying his handkerchief to its collar, he walked slowly away, leading his horse. The mastiff followed at once, walking with difficulty, for its hind-legs were almost paralyzed from the spear-wound,

which had passed through its body just under the spine, behind the ribs. It seemed, however, to feel that Frank was its master now, and laid its great head in his hand as he walked beside it.

As Frank saw the line on which the caravan was now moving, he walked slowly across to it and halted until the wagons came up. The mastiff was lifted into one of them, and laid on some empty flour-sacks. Some more water was given it, and the caravan proceeded on its way.

The terrible fate which had befallen their predecessors cast a deep gloom over the party, who shuddered to think how narrowly they had escaped such a fate; there was no need now to impress upon any the necessity of avoiding straggling, and redoubled vigilance was observed during the march.

Frank attended assiduously to the mastiff, to whom he gave the name of Turk. The spear-wound was kept poulticed, and that in the head was plastered. Had the dog received such wounds at any other time they would have probably proved fatal; but on the plains wounds heal rapidly, and the brisk air and the life of activity and exercise render man and beast alike able to sustain serious injuries without succumbing.

In a week Turk was able to walk with the caravan; a fortnight later it could gallop by Frank's side. They were now entering the Alkali Plains, a wild and desolate region, where water is extremely scarce, and, when found, brackish and bitter to the taste, and where the very shrubs are impregnated with salt, and uneatable by most animals. In anticipation of the hardships to be endured in crossing this region, the bullocks had been allowed for some time a daily ration of grain in addition to the grass they could pick up during the halt, and were therefore in good condition.

A halt was made for three days before entering this district, and the teams were fresh and full of work when they

started. The marches across the salt plain were long and painful to man and beast; the dust, which rose in clouds, was so impregnated with salt that it caused an intense irritation to the lips and nostrils.

Everything was done as far as possible to alleviate the sufferings of the animals. Casks were filled with water at each halting-place, and each time the oxen halted for rest their mouths and nostrils were sponged, and a small allowance given them to drink. As they progressed they had reason to congratulate themselves on the precautions they had taken, for scarce a mile was passed without their coming across signs of the misfortunes which had befallen those who had gone before, in the shape of abandoned wagons, stores cast out to lighten the loads, and skeletons of oxen and horses. But on the other hand, there was now comparatively slight danger of an Indian attack, for even the horses of the redskins, hardy as they are, could not support the hardships of a prolonged stay on the Alkali Plains.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE GOLD-FIELDS.

IT WAS with intense delight that all in the caravan noticed the gradual change of herbage which showed that they were approaching the confines of this terrible region; and when, at their first halt after leaving it, they came upon flowing streams, a general bath was indulged in by man and beast, the oxen lying down in the water, and being with great difficulty induced to emerge from it. The hunters now recommenced their excursions in search of game, for all were suffering from the want of fresh meat, the children especially feeling the privation.

Turk accompanied the party. The dog was now completely restored, and nothing could induce it to leave Frank's side. It was quite young, and Frank soon taught it to remain by his horse while he dismounted to stalk game; while in pursuit on horseback, Turk often pursued and pulled down deer who would otherwise have escaped.

One day Dick and Frank had gone out alone, and had been led a long distance from the line of march in pursuit of a herd of deer. These had finally gone up a narrow cañon in the mountains. The hunters pursued them for some distance, and then, despairing of overtaking them, turned their horses, and began to retrace their steps. Suddenly Turk, who was in advance, stopped, uttered a deep growl, and its hair bristled from its head to its tail.

"What is it, Turk?" Frank asked.

The animal replied with another low, deep growl.

"It must be some savage beast," Frank said.

"That ain't likely," Dick said; "any beast in this cañon would have moved away when we passed before. I think the dog must scent Injins. A party may have seen us entering the gap, and may be in pursuit."

He threw himself off his horse, and listened, with his ear to the ground.

"It's Injins, sure enough!" he exclaimed; "I can hear the clattering of horses' hoofs on the hard rock. There's nothing for it but for us to make our way up the cañon."

They turned their horses, and galloped forward, Turk, after one more growl in the direction of the Indians, following. Presently the defile divided.

"Shall we take the main branch, or the one to the right?" Frank asked.

"Better keep straight on," Dick said; "the other may lead into some valley from which there could be no getting out, and we should be caught in a trap. See!" he said, as he halted, "the deer have gone that way. Do you see some of the pebbles have been thrown out of that little stream?

"Jump off your horse, and cut some bits off your blankets and tie them round your horse's feet. If the Indians see no marks going forward they will naturally suppose we have turned off here in pursuit of the deer."

Frank did what his comrade suggested; but quickly as the work was performed, they heard the sound of the horsemen in pursuit, loud and distinct, before they again set forward. Then, springing on their horses, they rode up the cañon. After awhile they halted; the sounds of pursuit had ceased, and they had no doubt the Indians had turned off into the other ravine.

"It all depends how far that runs," Dick said, "how soon they will be in pursuit again. If it comes soon to an end it will not be long before we have them after us; if it goes on for some miles we are safe."

Winding between perpendicular cliffs of great height, they rode forward, mounting steadily. It was impossible to make rapid progress, for although in some places the bottom of the ravine was bare, smooth rock, at others it was piled with boulders.

It was three hours before they emerged from it, and upon doing so found they were upon an elevated plateau. Before they moved forward, Frank said, "Turk, do you hear them?" The dog stood with ears erect and quivering nostrils, looking down the ravine which they had just left. Presently he gave a low, deep growl.

"They are coming," Frank said; "but they must be a good way off, for Turk did not hear them at first. Which way shall we go, Dick?"

"We had better turn to the left," Dick said, "for our natural line leads to the right. However, it does not make much difference, for they will be able to track us; still, it may puzzle them. It will be dark in a couple of hours, and if we can keep ahead till then we are safe."

They started at a gallop, and for an hour rode at full speed in the direction which would take them down to the plain at or near the spot where they had halted the night before.

"Look out, Frank! rein up!" Dick suddenly shouted. Frank pulled his horse back on its haunches, and but just in time, for at the brow of the swell up which they had been galloping, the ground fell suddenly away in a precipice two hundred feet deep, and the horse was barely a length from it when he brought it to a standstill.

"We are in a mess," Dick said. "The Injins behind us will know of this, and instead of following will scatter to the right and left, as they will know that we must turn one way or the other.

"In that case," Frank said, "our best plan will be to go straight back."

"You are right," Dick exclaimed, "that is the best thing we can do. We won't follow the exact track, as a few of them may have kept our line, but will bear a little distance off it, and hope they may pass us unseen; the sun is setting already, half an hour and it will be dark."

Taking every precaution to conceal their trail, they rode back, keeping a hundred yards or so to the right of the line by which they had come. A quarter of an hour passed, and then Turk gave his growl of warning.

"Could not have been better," Dick exclaimed, "this brushwood is just the place for us."

They threw themselves from their horses, and made the animals lie down at full length in the low bushes, and laid themselves down beside them.

"Hush! Turk," Frank said to the dog, as he laid his hand upon its head. "You must lie quiet, sir, and not make the least noise."

The dog, who was quivering with excitement, lay down quietly, as if it comprehended the need for silence.

"One, two, three, four, five, six," Dick counted, peering through the bushes. "Six of them; we could fight that lot easy, but the sound of our rifles would bring the whole gang down upon us."

The Indians were not riding at full speed, for their horses were tired, having already made a long march before they saw the hunters following the deer to the cañon, and they did not expect to overtake those of whom they were in pursuit, believing that when they reached the precipice they would make along it to the right or left, and so fall into the hands of one or other of the parties who had gone to intercept them.

No sooner were they fairly out of sight than the hunters rose, and, remounting their horses, continued their way. "It's well-nigh dark," Dick said, "and I doubt if they will be able to make out our back-track when they get to the edge; at any rate they cannot follow it."

They rode on until they found that their horses could no longer carry them, then, dismounting, led them by the bridle. They had been steering by the stars, and presently found themselves at the upper end of the ravine.

"We won't enter this now," Dick said, "for some of them may take it into their heads to gallop back, although that ain't very likely. Anyhow the horses can't go any further, and if they could, we couldn't make our way over these stones, it'll be as dark as pitch down there. So we will move away two hundred yards and let the horses feed while we get a few hours' sleep. That dog of yourn will give us notice if any of the varmint are coming this way."

The night passed without alarm, and at the first dawn of light they were upon their feet again. The horses were given a mouthful of water from the skins, and then the hunters mounted and rode down the cañon. There would be pursuit, they knew well; but the Indians would not be able to take up the trail until daylight, and would be an hour and a half following it to the top of the cañon, so that they had fully two hours' start. This being the case, they did not hurry their horses, but kept up a steady pace until they emerged at the lower end of the ravine: then they urged them forward, and two hours later arrived at the halting-place of the caravan. No move had been made, but the instant they were seen approaching, Abe and his two comrades rode up to meet them.

"What has happened?" he asked, as he reached them. "We have been terrible uneasy about you, and I was just going to start to try and pick up your track and follow you."

Dick related the adventure.

"It war well it war no worse," Abe said. "That critter's sense has saved your lives, for ef he hadn't given you warning you would have ridden slap into the hands of the Injins; you may consider you are quits with him now,

Frank. But it war a nasty fix, and I congratulate you both on having brought your har safely back to camp; that coming straight back on your trail when you was stopped by the fall of the ground was a judgmatical business."

"It was Frank's idea," Dick said.

"Wall, he just hit the right thing; if it hadn't been for that you would have been rubbed out sure."

At the next halting-place they found that three or four of the caravans which had preceded them had halted, being afraid to move foward in small parties, as the Indians had made several attacks. With the accession of force given by the arrival of John Little's party, they considered themselves able to encounter any body of redskins they might meet, as there were now upward of fifty wagons collected, with a fighting force of seventy or eighty men.

They therefore moved forward confidently. Several times parties of Indian horsemen were seen in the distance, but they never showed in force, the strength of the caravan being too great for any hope of a successful attack being made upon it.

It was nearly five months from the time of their leaving Omaha before the caravan approached the point where the great plateau of Nevada falls abruptly down to the low lands of California many thousand feet below. Here the hunters bade farewell to the emigrants, whom they had so long escorted. All danger of Indians had been long since passed, and they were now within a short distance of the gold regions.

Very deep and sincere were the thanks which were poured upon them by the emigrants, who felt that they owed their lives entirely to the vigilance and bravery of Abe and his companions. They expected to meet again ere long at the gold-fields, and many were the assurances that should by any chance better luck attend their search than was met with by the hunters, the latter should share in their good fortune.

The change in the character of the scenery was sudden and surprising. Hitherto the country had been bare and treeless, but the great slopes of the Nevada mountains were covered from top to bottom with a luxuriant growth of timber. Nowhere in the world are finer views to be obtained than on the slopes of the Nevada mountains. The slopes are extremely precipitous, and sometimes, standing on a crag, one can look down into a valley five or six thousand feet below, clothed from top to bottom with luxuriant foliage, while far away in front, at the mouth of the valley, can be seen the low, rich flats of California.

On the lower slopes of these mountains lay the gold deposits. These were found in great beds of gravel and clay, which in countless generations had become so hardened that they almost approached the state of conglomerate. The gold from these beds had been carried either by streams which ran through them, or by the action of rain and time, into the ravines and valleys, where it was found by the early explorers. These great beds of gravel have been since worked by hydraulic machinery, water being brought by small canals, or flumes, many miles, along the face of the hills, to reservoirs situated one or two hundred feet above the gravel to be operated upon.

From the reservoirs extremely strong iron pipes lead down to the gravel, and to the end of these pipes are fitted movable nozzles, like those of fire-engines, but far larger. The water pours out through these nozzles with tremendous force, breaking up the gravel, and washing it away down a long series of wooden troughs, in which the gold settles, and is caught by a variety of contrivances.

But in the early days of gold discovery the very existence of these beds of gravel was unknown, and gold was obtained only in the ravines and valleys by washing the soil in the bottom. It had already been discovered that the soil was richer the further the searchers went down, by far the

greater finds being made when the diggers reached the solid rock at the bottom, in the irregularities of which, worn by water thousands of years before, large quantities of rough gold were often discovered.

There was no difficulty in following the track through the forest, and after two days' traveling the party arrived at the first mining village. They chose a piece of ground for their camp, fastened their horses to stumps, erected a tent of blankets, and placed in it the stores brought on their baggage-horses, whch had remained untouched since they started. Then, leaving one of their number in charge, they started off to visit the diggings.

The whole of the bottom of the narrow valley was a scene of life and bustle. The existence of gold in the valley had been discovered but three weeks before, but a rush had taken place from other diggings. The ground had been allotted out, and a number of tents pitched, and rough huts erected. Men were working as if for bare life. The lots were small, and the ground was already perfectly honeycombed with holes. Generally the diggers worked in batches of four or five, each member of which took up a claim, so that the space for operations was enlarged.

Two men labored with pick and shovel, and the baskets, as they were filled with earth and sand, were first screened in a sieve to remove the larger portion of stones and rock, and were then poured into what was known as a cradle, which was a long trough on rockers; one man brought water in buckets from the stream, and poured it into this, while another kept the cradle in constant motion. The mud and lighter portions of stone flowed away over the edge or were swept off by the hand of the men employed in working it, the particles of gold sinking to the bottom of the machine, where they were found at the clean-up at the end of the day's work.

The newcomers looked on with great interest at the

work, asking questions as to the luck which attended the operators. The majority gave but a poor account of their luck, the value of the finds at the end of the day being barely sufficient to pay the enormous rate charged for provisions, which had to be carried up from the coast some hundreds of miles away. The stores were brought in wagons as far as Sacramento, and from that town were carried to the diggings on the backs of mules and horses. Consequently it was impossible for a man to live on the poorest necessities of life for less than three or four dollars a day, and in the out-of-the-way valleys the cost was often considerably more.

Some of the diggers owned that they were doing well, but there was a general disinclination to state even the approximate amount of their daily winnings. The hunters found, however, that the general belief was that some of those who had claims in the center of the valley, where of course the gold would settle the thickest, were making from ten to twenty ounces per day.

"That's something like!" Dick said. "Just fancy making from forty to eighty pounds per day. I vote we set to work at once. As well here as anywhere else."

"Yes, I suppose we may as well begin here," Frank agreed; "at any rate until we hear what is being done in the other places. But you see we must be ready to move off as soon as a report comes of some fresh discovery, so as to get good places. Here, of course, we must be content to settle down outside the rest. We will mark out five claims at once, turn up the ground, and put our tools there; they say that's sufficient to take possession. Then we will go up into the forests and cut down a pine or two, and slit it up into planks for making one of those cradles. That will take us all day to-morrow, I reckon."

As they sat round the fire that evening, talking over their prospects, Abe said:

"I tell you what it is, mates, I have been thinking this here matter over, and when I sees what tremendous prices are being charged for grub here, I concluded there must be a big thing to be made in the way of carrying. Now we have got our five riding-horses, and the three baggage-horses, that makes eight. Now what I proposes is this; three of us shall work the claims, and the other two shall work the horses; we can sell the riding-saddles down at Sacramento, and get pack-saddles instead. We can begin by carrying for one of the traders here.

"I hear that a horse can earn from five to ten dollars a day, so our eight horses will earn forty to eighty dollars a day. Now that's a good sartin living for us all, especially as we shall bring up the provisions for ourselves, instead of paying big rates here. Arterards we will see how things go, and if we like we can open a store here, and one of us mind it. Anyhow the horses will keep us well. If the claim turns out well, so much the better; if it don't, we can do very well without it. I proposes as we take it by turns to drive the horses and dig."

The counsel was good and prudent, but it was only adopted after some discussion, for the sums which the more fortunate diggers were earning were so large that all looked forward to making a rapid fortune, and were inclined to despise the small but steady gains offered by the plan Abe suggested. However, Frank sided with Abe, and offered to go with him on the first trip to Sacramento, and the others thereupon fell in with the plan.

The next day the cradle was made by Abe and Frank, the others setting to to dig and wash out in a bucket. At the end of a day of hard work they had got about a quarter of an ounce of glittering yellow dust. This was not paying work, but they were not disappointed; they had not expected to strike upon good ground at the first attempt, and were quite satisfied by the fact that they really had met with the gold which they had come so far to seek.

That evening Abe made a bargain to bring up goods from Sacramento for one of the store-keepers, having previously found the rate which was current. At daybreak next morning he and Frank started off on horseback, each with three horses tied, head and tail, behind the one he was riding, Turk marching gravely by their side.

The distance to Sacramento was upward of seventy miles. On their road they met numerous parties making their way up the mountains. All carried a pick and shovel, a bucket and blanket, and a small sack with flour and bacon. Many of them were sailors, who had deserted from their ships at San Francisco, where scores of vessels were lying unable to leave for want of hands.

All, as they passed, asked the last news from the diggings, where the last rush was, and what was the average take at the camp, and then hurried on, eager to reach the spot where, as every man believed, fortune awaited him.

Two days of travel down the mountains took them to Sacramento. Here their saddles were disposed of, and pack-saddles bought. The horses were laden with sacks of sugar and flour, sides of bacon, and mining tools, and after a day's stay in town they started back for the camp.

Sacramento, but a few months before a sleepy, quiet city, mostly inhabited by Spaniards, or rather people of Spanish descent, was now a scene of animation and bustle. Long teams of wagons, laden with stores, rolled in almost hourly across the plains from San Francisco, while the wharves at the river-side were surrounded by laden barges. Bands of newly arrived emigrants wandered through the streets, asking eager questions of any one who had time enough to talk as to the best way of getting to the diggings, and as to the camp which they had better select for their first attempt. Dark-looking men, half Spaniard and half Indian, went along on their little ponies,

or rode at the head of a string of laden animals, with an air of perfect indifference to the bustle around them.

Sounds of shouting and singing came through the doors of some saloons, in which many of the fortunate diggers were busily engaged in dissipating their hard-earned gains. Men sunburnt almost to blackness, in red shirts and canvas trousers, walked along the streets as if the town and all in it belonged to them in virtue of the store of gold-dust tied up in their waist-belts. In these, revolvers and bowie-knives were stuck conspicuously, and the newly arrived emigrants looked with awe and envy at these men who had already reaped a harvest at the mines. Shooting affrays were of frequent occurrence in the drinking saloons, where at night gambling was invariably carried on, the diggers being as reckless of their lives as of their money.

"About ten days of that place would be enough to ruin any man," Abe said, as they walked at the head of their cavalcade from the town. "I reckon as Sacramento is a sort of hell on arth, and guess there's more wickedness goes on in that ere little town than in any other place its own size on the face of creation. They tells me as San Francisco is worse, but at any rate Sacramento is bad enough for me."

On the evening of the third day after leaving Sacramento they arrived at the mining camp, and having delivered the stores they had brought up to the trader, and received the amount agreed upon, they took their way to the spot where they had pitched their camp.

"Well, lads, what luck?" Abe asked, as at the sound of their feet their comrades came out to greet them.

"We have got about four ounces of dust," Dick said, "and our backs are pretty nigh broken, and our hands that blistered we can hardly hold the shovel. However, we have been better the last two days. I expect there have been two or three hundred people arrived here since you left, and they are all at work now."

"Well, that's pretty well for a beginning," Abe said, "though you wouldn't have much of your four ounces left if you had had to pay for grub. However, we've brought up another half-sack of flour, twenty pounds of sugar, and five pounds of tea, and a half-side of bacon, so we have got quite enough to go on for a long time yet. I have brought up, too, a good stout tent, which will hold us comfortable, and, after paying for all that, here's thirty pounds in money. I got five pounds a horse-load, so with your earnings and ours we haven't made a bad week's work; that's pretty nigh ten pounds a man. I don't say that's anything wonderful, as times goes here; but when we hit on a good spot for our digging, we shall pick it up quick. Now let's pitch the new tent, and then we will have supper, for I can tell you walking twenty-five miles in this mountain air gives one something like an appetite."

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTAIN BAYLEY.

DURING the time which had elapsed between the departure of Frank Norris from England, and his arrival at the gold-diggings in California, much had happened at home which he would have been interested to learn had he maintained any communication with his relatives there. On the morning when Frank had been accused by Dr. Litter of abstracting the note from his table, the latter had, as he had informed Frank he intended to do, sent a note to Captain Bayley informing him that a most painful circumstance had taken place with reference to his nephew, and begging him to call upon him between twelve and one.

Captain Bayley had done so, and had, as Fred Barkley stated, been furious at the news which the doctor conveyed to him; his fury, however, being in no degree directed toward his nephew, but entirely against the head-master for venturing to bring so abominable an accusation against Frank.

The evidence which Dr. Litter adduced had no effect whatever in staying his wrath, and so vehement and angry was the old officer, that Dr. Litter was obliged to ring the bell and order the servant to show him out. From Dean's yard he took a cab and drove direct to his solicitor, and requested him instantly to take proceedings against the head-master for defamation of character.

"But, Captain Bayley," the lawyer urged, "we must first see whether this gentleman had any reasonable cause

for his belief. If the evidence is what may be considered as strong, we must accept his action as taken *bonâ fide.*"

"Don't tell me, sir," Captain Bayley exclaimed angrily. "What do I care for evidence? Of course he told me a long rigmarole story, but he could not have believed it himself. No one but a fool could believe my nephew Frank guilty of theft; the idea is preposterous, it was as much as I could do to restrain myself from caning him when he was speaking."

The lawyer smiled inwardly, for Dr. Litter was a tall, stately man, six feet two in height, while Captain Bayley was a small, slight figure, by no means powerful when in his prime, and now fully twenty years the senior of the head-master.

"Well, Captain Bayley," he said, "in the first place it is necessary that I should know the precise accusation which this gentleman has brought against your nephew. Will you be good enough to repeat to me, as nearly as you can, the statement which he made, as, of course, if we proceed to legal measures, we must be exact in the matter?"

"Well, this is about the story he told me," Captain Bayley said, more calmly. "In the first place, it seems that the lad broke bounds one night, and went with a man named Perkins—who is a prize-fighter, and who I know gave him lessons in boxing, for I gave Frank five pounds last half to pay for them—to a meeting of these Chartist blackguards somewhere in the New Cut.

"Well, there was a row there, as there naturally would be at such a place, and it seems Frank knocked down some Radical fellow—a tailor, I believe—and broke his nose. Well, you know, I am not saying this was right; still, you know, lads will be lads, and I used to be fond of getting into a row myself when I was young, for I could spar in those days pretty well, I can tell you, Griffith. I would have given a five-pound note to have seen Frank set to with

that Radical tailor. Still, I dare say, if the lad had told me about it I should have got into a passion and blown him up."

"I shouldn't be surprised at all," the lawyer said dryly.

"No. Well that would do him no harm; he knows me, and he knows that I am peppery. Well, it seems this fellow found out who he was, and threatened to report the thing to the head-master, in which case this Dr. Litter said he should have expelled him for being out of bounds, a thing which in itself I call monstrous. Now, here is where Frank was wrong. He ought to have come straight to me and told me the whole affair, and got his blowing-up and his money. Instead of that, he asked three or four of the other boys—among them my nephew Fred—to lend him the money, but they were all out of funds. Well, somebody, it seems, sent Frank a ten-pound note in an envelope, with the words 'From a friend,' and no more. Frank showed the envelope to the others, and they all agreed that it was a sort of godsend and Frank sent the note to the tailor. Now it seems that the day before Frank got the note the head-master, when he was hearing his form had put a ten-pound note with some other things on the table, and being called out, he, like a careless old fool, left them lying there.

"Some time afterward he missed the note, and does not remember taking it up from the table; still, he says, he did not suspect any of the boys of his form of taking it, and thinking that he had dropped it on the way to his house, he stopped the note at the bank, happening to have its number. A few days afterward the note was presented; it was traced to the tailor, who admitted having received it from Frank; and would you believe it, sir, this man now pretends to believe that my nephew stole it from the table, and sent it to himself in an envelope. It's the most preposterous thing I ever heard."

Mr. Griffith looked grave.

"Of course, Captain Bayley, having met your nephew at your house several times, I cannot for a moment believe him guilty of taking the note; still, I must admit that the evidence is strongly circumstantial, and were it a stranger who was accused I should say at once the thing looked nasty."

"Pooh! nonsense, Griffith," the old officer said angrily; "there's nothing in it, sir—nothing whatever. Somebody found the note kicking about, I dare say, and didn't know who it belonged to; he knew Frank was in a corner, and sent it to him. The thing is perfectly natural."

"Yes," the lawyer assented doubtfully; "but the question is, who did know it? Was the fact of your nephew requiring the money generally known in the school?"

"No," Captain Bayley admitted. "The doctor examined the four boys before Frank. They all declared that they knew nothing of the note, and that they had not mentioned the circumstance to a soul; but my opinion is that one of them is a liar."

"It is certainly necessary to believe," Mr. Griffith said slowly, "that one of them is either a liar or a thief. Of course there may be some other solution of the matter, but the only one that I can see, just at the present moment, is this: Your nephew is the sort of lad to be extremely popular among his schoolmates; either one of these four boys took the note from the master's table, with the good-natured but most mistaken idea of getting him out of a scrape, or they must have mentioned his need of money to some of their school-fellows, one of whom finding the note, perhaps in the yard, where the head-master may have dropped it, sent it to Frank to relieve him of the difficulty.

"These are possible solutions of the mystery, at any rate. But if you will take my advice, Captain Bayley, you will not, in the present state of affairs, take the steps which

you propose to me against Dr. Litter. It will be time enough to do that when your nephew's innocence is finally and incontestably proved. Of course," he said, seeing that his listener was about to break out again, "you and I knowing him, know that he is innocent; but others who do not know him might entertain some doubt upon the subject, and a jury might consider that the doctor was justified, with the evidence before him, in acting as he did, in which case an immense deal of damage might be done by making the matter a subject of general talk."

With some difficulty Captain Bayley was persuaded to allow his intention to rest for awhile.

"It is late now," he said, "but I shall go and see Frank to-morrow. I wish I had seen him this afternoon before I came to you. However, I have no doubt when I get home I shall find a letter from him—not defending himself, of course, as he would know that to be unnecessary, but telling me the story in his own way."

But no letter came that evening, to Captain Bayley's great irritation. He told Alice Hardy the whole circumstances, and she was as indignant as himself, and warmly agreed that the head-master should be punished for his unjust suspicions.

"And do you say he is really going to be expelled to-morrow?" she asked, in a tone of horror.

"So the fellow said, my dear; but he shall smart for it, and the laws of the land shall do Frank justice."

At half-past nine the next morning Fred Barkley arrived at Captain Bayley's.

"Well," his uncle exclaimed, as he entered, "I suppose you have been sent to tell me they have got to the bottom of this rigmarole affair."

"No, uncle," Fred said, "I have, I am sorry to say, been sent to tell you that Frank last night left his boarding-house and is not be found."

Captain Bayley leaped from his seat in great wrath.

"The fool! the idiot! to run away like a coward instead of facing it out; and not a line or a message has he sent to me. Did you know, sir, that your cousin was going to run away?"

Fred hesitated.

"Yes, uncle, I knew that he was going, and did my best to dissuade him, but it was useless."

Captain Bayley walked up and down the room with quick steps, uttering exclamations testifying his anger and annoyance.

"Has he got any money?" he said suddenly, halting before Fred. "Did he get any money from you?"

Fred hesitated again, and then said:

"Well, uncle, since you insist upon knowing, I did let him have twenty pounds which I got for the sale of my books."

"I believe, sir," the old officer said furiously, "that you encouraged him in this step, a step which I consider fatal to him."

Fred hesitated again, and then said:

"Well, uncle, I am sorry that you should be so angry about it, but I own that I did not throw any obstacle in the way."

"You did not, sir," Captain Bayley roared, "and why did you not? Are you a fool too? Don't you see that this running away instead of facing matters out cannot but be considered, by people who do not know Frank, as a proof of his guilt, a confession that he did not dare to stay to face his accusers?"

Fred was silent.

"Answer me, sir," Captain Bayley said; "don't stand there without a word to explain your conduct. Do you or do you not see that this cowardly flight will look like a confession of guilt?"

"I did see that, uncle," Fred said, "but I thought that better than a public expulsion."

"Oh! you did, did you?" his uncle said sarcastically, "when you knew that if he had stopped quietly at home we should have proved his innocence in less than no time."

Fred made no reply.

"Do you think we shouldn't have proved his innocence?" roared his uncle.

"I am sorry to say anything which is displeasing to you, uncle, but I fear that you would never have proved Frank's innocence."

The words seemed to have a sobering effect on Captain Bayley. The blood seemed to die out of his face; he put one hand on a chair, as if to steady himself, while he looked fixedly in his nephew's face.

"Do you mean, Fred," he said, in a low voice, "do you mean that you have a doubt of Frank's innocence?"

"I should rather not say anything about it," Fred replied. "I hope with all my heart that Frank is not guilty, but——"

"What do you think?" Captain Bayley repeated; "have you any grounds whatever for believing him guilty?"

"No, sir, and I do not wish you to be in the slightest degree influenced by what I said." He paused, but Captain Bayley's eyes were still fixed upon him, as if commanding a complete answer.

"Well, sir," he went on hesitatingly, "I must own that, sad as it is to say so, I fear Frank did it."

"Did he confess it to you?" Captain Bayley asked, in a strained, strange voice.

"No, uncle, not in so many words, but he said things which seemed to me to mean that. When I tried to dissuade him from running away, and urged him to remain till his innocence could be proved, he said angrily, 'What's the use of talking like that, when you know as well as I

do that it can't be proved.' Afterward he said, 'It is a bad job, and I have been an awful fool. But who could have thought that note would be traced back to Litter?' and other remarks of the same kind. He may be innocent, uncle—you know how deeply I wish we could prove him so—but I fear, I greatly fear, that we shall be doing Frank more service by letting the matter drop. You know the fellows in the school all believe him innocent, and though his going away has staggered some of them, the general feeling is still all in his favor; therefore they are sure to speak of him as a sort of victim, and when he returns, which of course he will do in a few years' time, the matter will have died away and have been altogether forgotten."

The old officer sat down at the table and hid his face in his hands.

All this time Alice, pale and silent, had sat and listened with her eyes fixed upon the speaker, but she now leaped up to her feet.

"Uncle," she said, "don't believe him, he is not speaking the truth, I am sure he is not. He hates Frank, and I have known it all along, because Frank is bigger and better than he; because Frank was generous and kind-hearted; because every one liked Frank and no one liked him. He is telling a lie now, and I believe every word he has said since he came into the room is false."

"Hush! child," the old officer said; "you must not speak so, my dear. If it was only the word of one lad against another, it would be different; but it is not so. The proof is very strong against Frank. I would give all I am worth if I could still believe him innocent, and had he come to me and put his hand in mine, and said, 'Uncle, I am innocent,' I would have believed him against all the evidence in the world. It is not I who condemn him, he has condemned himself. He sends me no word; he cannot

lock me in the face and declare himself innocent. He runs away at night, knowing well that there could be but one construction as to this, and that all would judge him guilty. No, Alice, it breaks my heart to say so, but I can struggle no longer against these facts. The lad whom I have loved as a son has turned out a thief."

"No, uncle, no," the girl cried passionately, "I will never believe it, not to the end of my life. I cannot prove him innocent, but I know he is so, and some day it will be proved; but till then I shall still think of him as my dear brother, as my true-hearted brother, who has been wrongfully accused, and who is the victim of some wicked plot of which, perhaps, Fred Barkley knows more than any one else," and, bursting into a passion of tears, she ran from the room.

Fred looked after her with an expression of pity and sorrow.

"Poor child!" he said, "it is a terrible blow for her, and she scarce knows what she is saying."

"It is a terrible blow," Captain Bayley said, in a dreary voice, "a most terrible blow to me and to her. No wonder she feels it; and I have been planning and hoping that some day, a few years hence, those two would get to like each other in a different way. I had, by my will, divided my fortune equally between you and him, but I have liked him best. Of course, I brought him up, and he has been always with me; it was natural that I should do so. Still I wanted to be fair, and I divided it equally. But I was pleased at the thought that her fortune, which is, as you know, a very large one, would be his, and enable him to make a great figure in the world if he had chosen; and now it is all over.

"Go away now, my boy, the blow has been too much for me. I am getting an old man, and this is the second great blow I have had. Do not take to heart the wild words of

poor little Alice. You see she scarcely knows what she is saying."

Without another word Fred took his departure. When once out of sight of the house his steps quickened, and he walked briskly along.

"Splendid!" he said to himself; "a grand stroke indeed, and perfectly safe. Frank is not likely to return for twenty years, if ever, and I don't think the old man is good for another five. I expect I shall have some trouble with that little cat, Alice; but she is only a child, and will come round in time, and her fortune will be quite as useful to me as it would have been to him. I always knew he was little better than a fool, but I could hardly have hoped that he would have walked into the trap as he has done. I suppose that other blow old Bayley spoke of was that affair of his daughter. That was a lucky business for me too."

Fred Barkley was not mistaken, it was of his daughter Captain Bayley had been thinking when he spoke. He had married young when he first went out to India, and had lost his wife two years later, leaving him with a daughter six months old. He had sent her home to England, and after a twenty years' absence he had returned and found her grown up.

She had inherited something of her father's passionate disposition, and possessed, in addition, an amount of sullen obstinacy which was wholly alien to his nature. But her father saw none of these defects in her character. She was very beautiful, with an air of pride and hauteur which he liked. She had a right to be proud, he thought, for she was a very wealthy heiress, for, his two elder brothers having died childless while he was in India, the fine property of their father had all descended to him.

Though the girl had many suitors, she would listen to none of them, having formed a strong attachment to a

man in station altogether beneath her. He had given lessons in drawing at the school which had been her home as well as her place of education during her father's absence, for Captain Bayley had quarreled with his sisters, both of whom, he considered, had married beneath them.

The fact that Ella Bayley was an only child, and that her father was a wealthy man, was known in the school, and had, in some way, come to the ears of the drawing-master, who was young, and by no means ill-looking. He had played his cards well. Ella was romantic and impetuous, and, before long, returned the devotion which her teacher expressed for her.

When her father returned home, and Ella left school to take her place at the head of his establishment, she had hoped that she should be able to win from him a consent to her engagement; but she found his prejudices on the subject of birth were strong, and she waited two years before she broached the subject.

The wrath of Captain Bayley was prodigious; he heaped abusive epithets upon the man of her choice, till Ella's temper rose also. There was a passionate quarrel between father and daughter. The next morning Ella was missing; a week afterward Captain Bayley received a copy of the certificate of her marriage, with a short note from Ella saying that when he could make his mind up to forgive her and her husband, and to acknowledge that the latter did not deserve the abusive language that he had applied to him, she should be glad to return and resume her place as his affectionate and loving daughter. She gave an address at which he could communicate to her.

Three years passed before Captain Bayley's anger had sufficiently calmed down for him to write to his daughter saying that he forgave her. The letter was returned by the people at the house, with a note saying that many months had elapsed since any inquiries had been made for

letters for Mrs. Smedley, and that they had altogether lost sight of her. Now that the captain had once made up his mind to forgive his daughter, he was burning with impatience to see her again, and he at once employed a detective to find out what had become of her.

From the person to whose house the letter had been directed the detective learned the address where she and her husband had resided while in London.

For a time it seemed they had lived expensively, the sale of Ella's jewels keeping them in luxury for some months. Then hard times had come upon them; the man had altogether lost his connection as a teacher, and could, or would, do nothing to support his wife and himself; they had moved from the place they had first lived at, and taken much smaller lodgings.

Here the people of the house reported their life had been very unhappy; the husband had taken to drink, and there had been fierce and frequent quarrels between them, arising—the landlady had gleaned, from the loud and angry utterance of the husband—from the wife's refusal to appeal to her father for assistance. They had left this place suddenly, and in debt; thence they had moved from lodging to lodging at short intervals, their position getting worse, until they were last lodged in a wretched garret. From this point they were traced with great trouble down to Nottingham, where the husband obtained a precarious living by producing designs for embroidery and curtains.

Had he been steady he might have soon done fairly, but a great part of his time was spent in public-houses, and he was seldom sober. When returning home one night in a state of drunkenness, he was run over by a heavy van and killed. As his wife possessed but a few shillings in the world, he was buried at the expense of the parish and his widow at once left the town.

The people where she lodged believed that she had gone

to London, taking with her her six-months-old child, and had started to tramp the way on foot. The woman said that she doubted whether she could ever have got there. She was an utterly broken woman, with a constant racking cough, which was like to tear her to pieces, and before she set out her landlady had urged upon her that the idea of her starting to carry a heavy child to London was nothing short of madness.

After this all trace of Ella had been lost. Advertisements offering large rewards appeared in the papers; the books of every workhouse between Nottingham and London, and indeed of almost every workhouse in England, were carefully searched to see if there was any record of the death of a woman with a child about the time of her disappearance. A similar search was made at all the London hospitals, and at every institution where she might have crawled to die; but no trace had ever been found of her.

That she was dead was not doubted; for it was found that at Nottingham she had once gone to the parish doctor for some medicine for her child. The physician had taken particular notice of her, had asked her some questions, and had made a note in his case-book that the mother of the child he had prescribed for was in an advanced stage of consumption, and had probably but a few weeks, certainly not more than a few months, to live.

It was long before the search was given up as hopeless, and many hundreds of pounds were spent by Captain Bayley before he abandoned all hope of discovering, if not his daughter, at least her child. During the year which elapsed before he was forced to acknowledge that it was hopeless, Captain Bayley had suffered terribly. His self-reproaches were unceasing, and he aged many years in appearance.

It was three years after this, on the death of his sister,

Mrs. Norris, whose husband had died some years before, that he took Frank into his house and adopted him as his son, stating, however, to all whom it might concern, that he did not regard him as standing nearer to him as his heir than his other nephew, Fred Barkley, but that his property would be divided between them as they might show themselves worthy of it. It was three years later still, that, at the death of her father, an old fellow-officer, his household was increased by the addition of Alice, who had been left to his guardianship, but who had soon learned, like Frank, to address him as uncle.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MISSING HEIR.

IT WAS a long time before the house in Eaton Square in any way recovered its former appearance. Captain Bayley had lost much of his life and vivacity, and, as the servants remarked to each other, nothing seemed to put him out. He went for his morning ride in the Park, or his afternoon visit to the club, as usual, but his thoughts seemed far away; he passed old friends without seeing them, and if stopped he greeted them no longer with a cheery ring in his voice, or a quick smile of welcome. Every one who knew him remarked that Bayley was going down hill terribly fast, and was becoming a perfect wreck.

Frank's name was never now mentioned in the house. Its utterance had not been forbidden, but it had been dropped as a matter concerning which a hopeless disagreement existed. Alice had changed almost as much as her uncle. Her spirits were gone; her voice was no longer heard singing about the house; she no longer ran up and down the stairs with quick springing footsteps, and indeed seemed all at once to have changed from a young girl into a young woman. Sometimes, as she sat, the tears filled her eyes and rolled fast down her cheeks; at other times she would walk about with her eyebrows knitted, and hands clenched, and lips pursed together, a little volcano of suppressed anger.

Although no discussion on the subject had taken place between her and her guardian, it was an understood thing

that she maintained her opinion, and that she regarded Fred Barkley as an enemy. If she happened to be in the room when he was announced, she would rise and leave it without a word; if he remained to a meal, she would not make her appearance in the dining or drawing-rooms.

"Alice still regards me as the incarnation of evil," Fred said, with a forced laugh, upon one of those occasions.

"The child is a trump," Captain Bayley said warmly, "a warm lover and a good hater. What a thing it is," he said, with a sigh, "to be at an age when trust and confidence are unshakable, and when nothing will persuade you that what you wish to believe is not right; what would I not give for that child's power of trust?"

The household in Eaton Square were almost unanimous in Frank's favor. His genial, hearty manners rendered him a universal favorite with the servants; and although none knew the causes of Frank's sudden disappearance, the general opinion was that, whatever had happened, he could not have been to blame in the matter.

His warmest adherent was Evan Holl, who had months before been introduced to the house as assistant knife and boot cleaner by Frank. He did not sleep there, going home at nine o'clock in the evening when his work was done.

"Do you know, Harry," he said, one day, "what a rum crest, as they calls it—I asked the butler what it meant, and he says as how it was the crest of the family—Captain Bayley has; he's got it on his silver, and I noticed it when I was in the pantry to-day helping the butler to clean some silver dishes which had been lying by unused for some time. 'All families of distinction,' the butler said—he is mighty fond of using hard long words—'all families of distinction,' says he, ' 'as got their own crest, which belongs to them and no one else.' Now this 'ere crest of the guv'nor's is a hand holding a dagger, and the hand has

only got three fingers. I said as how there was two missing, and that the chap as did it couldn't have known much of his business to go and leave out two fingers. But the butler says, 'That's your hignorance,' says he; 'the hand 'as got only three fingers because a hancestor of the captain's in the time of the Crusaders'— 'And what's the Crusaders?' says I. 'The Crusaders was a war between the English and the Americans hundreds of years ago,' says he."

Harry burst into a shout of laughter. "Mr. Butler does not know anything about it, for the Crusades were wars between people who went out to the Holy Land to recover the Holy Sepulcher from the Turks who held it."

"Ah, well," Evan said, "it don't make no odds whether they was Turks or Americans. However, the butler says as how the Captain Bayley what lived in those days, he saw a red Injun a-crawling to stab the king, who was a-lying asleep in his tent, and just as his hand was up to stick in the knife, Captain Bayley he gives a cut with his sword which whips off two of the fingers, and before the Injun could turn round and go at him he gives another cut, and takes off his hand at the wrist, and the next cut he takes off his head; so the hand with three fingers holding a dagger was given him to carry as a crest. I suppose after a time the hand got wore out, or got bad, so as he couldn't have carried it about no longer, and instead of that, as a kind of remembrance of the affair, he 'as them put on his forks and spoons."

Mrs. Holl had been listening with grave interest to the narrative.

"Does I understand you to say, Evan, that no other family but that of the master's put this three-fingered hand with a knife on to their things?"

"That's so, mother; leastways it's what the butler says about it."

"Then if that's the case," Mrs. Holl said thoughtfully, "any one who has got this crest, as you calls it, on his things must be a relation of the captain."

"I suppose so, mother; he might be a long distance off, you know, because this 'ere affair took place hundreds of years ago, and there may be a lot of the same family about in different parts."

"So there might," Mrs. Holl said, in a disappointed voice.

"Why, mother," Harry said, "one would think it made some difference to you, you speak so mournfully about it."

"It don't make no difference to me, Harry," Mrs. Holl said, "but it makes a lot of difference to you. You know I told you two or three months ago how you come to be here. I don't know as I told you that round the neck of your mother, when she died in that room, was a bit of silk ribbon, and on it was a little seal of gold, with a red stone in it, which I put by very careful for you, though what good such a thing would do to you, or anybody else, I didn't see. Well, on that red stone there was something cut; and father he took it to a chap as understands about those things, who got some red wax, and hotted it, and dropped some of it on a paper, and then squeezed this 'ere stone down on it, and looks at the mark through a' eye-glass, and he tells father that it was a hand with three fingers holding a dagger."

"That was curious, mother," Harry said, "very curious. Can you fetch me the seal and let me have a look at it? I don't remember ever having seen it."

The seal was fetched by Mrs. Holl from a pill-box, in which it was carefully stored away in the corner of a drawer. Harry examined it closely.

"It looks like a hand holding a dagger," he said, "but it's too small for me to see whether it has three fingers or four. Evan, will you run round with it to the little

watchmaker's in the next street, and ask him to look at it with one of the glasses he sticks in his eye when he is at work, and to tell you whether it has three fingers or four."

Evan returned in a few minutes with the news that the watchmaker at once said that the hand had but three fingers.

"Well, from that, Harry," Mrs. Holl said, "if what this man have been and told Evan is right, you must be some relation to Captain Bayley."

"A cousin, fifty times removed, perhaps," Harry laughed, "but, at any rate, it is pleasant to be able to think that I come of a good family."

"You knew that before, Harry," Mrs. Holl said severely, "for I told you over and over again that your mother was a lady, though she was in bad circumstances, and I think, after charring in respectable houses for the last twenty years, I ought to know a lady when I sees one. Well, there's nothing as you think I could do about it?"

"I should think not," Harry laughed. "How the old gent would stare if Evan was to walk up to him and say, 'Captain Bayley, I have got a foster-brother at home who, I think, is a relation of yours.' That would be a nice piece of cheek, wouldn't it?"

Evan laughed.

"However, mother, I votes as in future we calls Harry Harry Bayley instead of Harry Holl."

"You won't do anything of the sort, Evan," the cripple lad answered hotly. "Holl's my name, and you don't suppose I am going to drop the name of the father and mother who brought me up, and have tended me all these years, for Bayley or any other name; besides, even if it should turn out that I am remotely connected with the family, there is no reason why my name should be Bayley, for, of course, if my mother had been a Bayley, she would have changed her name when she married."

Harry thought but little more of the matter, but Mrs. Holl turned it over frequently in her mind, and discussed it with John. John said, "He didn't think much would come of it; still, he didn't see as how there could be any harm in asking, seeing that she had set her mind on it."

So Mrs. Holl resolved to move in the matter. Evan, on being appealed to, said that he did not see how she was to get to speak with Captain Bayley; the footman wouldn't be likely to show her in to his master unless she stated her business. But after much pressing, and declaring over and over again he wished he had never said a word about the hand with three fingers, Evan consented, if he found an opportunity, to ask Captain Bayley to see his mother. This opportunity, however, did not arrive, Evan's duties never bringing him in contact with his employer. At last Mrs. Holl became desperate, and one morning, after breakfast, she went to Captain Bayley's house. The ring at the area-bell brought out the cook.

"What is it?" she said sharply.

"I am the mother, ma'am, of Evan, as works here."

"Well, come down, if you want to see him."

"I don't want to see him, I want to see Captain Bayley."

"I will tell the footman," the cook said, "but I don't think it likely as you can see the captain."

The footman soon made his appearance. Fortunately he was very young, and had not yet acquired that haughtiness of manner which characterizes his class. Evan had before told him that his mother wanted to see Captain Bayley, and had begged him to do his best, should she come, to facilitate her doing so.

"Good morning," he said. "Your boy told me you would be likely enough coming. So you want to see the captain; he has just finished his breakfast and gone into the study. Now, what shall I say you wants to see him for? I can't show you in, you know, without asking him first."

The young footman was, indeed, curious to know what Mrs. Holl's object could be in wishing to see his master. Evan had resisted all his attempts to find out, simply saying that it was a private affair of his mother's.

"Will you say to him," Mrs. Holl said, "that the mother of the boy as works here under you is most anxious for to see him just for two or three minutes; that it ain't nothing to do with the boy, but she wishes particular to ask Captain Bayley a question—if he will be so good as to see her—that no one else but hisself could answer."

"It's a rum sort of message," the young footman said, "but, anyhow, I will give it; the captain ain't as hot-tempered as he used to be, and he can but say he won't see you."

Captain Bayley looked mystified when the footman delivered Mrs. Holl's message to him; then he remembered that it was Frank who had introduced her son to help in the house, and he wondered whether her errand could have any connection with him.

"Well, show her up, James," he said; "but just tell her that my time is precious, and that I don't want to listen to long rambling stories, so whatever she has got to say, let her say it straight out."

"It's all right," James said, as, descending to the kitchen, he beckoned Mrs. Holl to follow him; "but the captain says you are to cut it short; so if you wants an answer you had best put your question, whatever it is, short and to the point, or he will snap you up in a minute, I can tell you."

Mrs. Holl followed into the library. She was at no time a very clear-headed thinker, and the difficulty of putting her question into a few words pressed heavily upon her.

"Now, my good woman, what is it?" Captain Bayley said, as she entered. "I am going out in a few minutes, so come straight to the point, if you please."

"I will come as straight as I can, sir," Mrs. Holl said breathlessly, "but indeed, sir, I am a bad hand at explaining things, and if you snaps me up I shall never get on with it."

Captain Bayley smiled a little. "Well, I will try and not snap you up if you will come to the point. Now, what is the point?"

"The point, sir," Mrs. Holl said despairingly, "is a hand with three fingers a-holding of a dagger."

Captain Bayley looked astonished. "You mean my crest," he said; "why, what on earth are you driving at?"

"Evan saw it on the forks," Mrs. Holl explained.

"Yes, no doubt he did," Captain Bayley said; "but what of that? That's my crest."

"Yes, sir, so Evan said, and when he told me it just knocked me silly like, and says I to him, says I——"

"Never mind what you said to him," Captain Bayley broke in, "what is it you want to say to me? What is there curious in my crest being on my spoons? Now just wait one minute, and tell me as plainly as you can."

Mrs. Holl waited a minute.

"Well, sir, it struck me all in a heap, because I've got in the house a thing with just such another hand, a-holding of a knife in it."

"Oh!" Captain Bayley said, "you have got some article with my crest on it in your house. How did you come by it? It must have been stolen."

"No, sir, I will take my davey as the young person as was my son Harry's mother never stole nothing in her life."

"The young person who was your son Harry's mother," Captain Bayley repeated, in a somewhat puzzled tone. "Are you talking of yourself?"

"Lor' no, sir, the young person."

"But what young person do you mean? How can any young person have been your son Harry's mother except yourself?"

"He ain't really my son, you see, sir; he is the son of a young person who we took in, John and I, and who died at our house; Harry is her son."

A great change passed over Captain Bayley's face, the expression of impatience died out, and was succeeded by one almost of awe. He dropped the paper which he had hitherto held in his hand, and leaning forward he asked in low tones:

"Do you mean that a woman who had in her possession some article with my crest on it, and who had a child with her, died in your house?"

"Yes, sir, that's what I mean; the article is a little gold seal, with a red stone to it."

"How long ago was this?" came slowly from Captain Bayley's lips.

"About seventeen years ago," Mrs. Holl said. "The mother died a few days afterward; the child is our Harry; and I came to ask you—but, good lawks!"

An ashen grayness had been stealing across the old officer's face, and Mrs. Holl was terrified at seeing him suddenly fall forward across the table.

She rushed to the door to ask for help. James was in the hall, having waited there, expecting momentarily to hear his master tell him to show his visitor out. He began to utter exclamations of dismay at seeing his master's senseless figure.

"I will lift him up," she said. "Run and fetch the butler and the cook, and then go for the doctor as quick as you can run; he has got a stroke."

The butler was first upon the scene. Mrs. Holl had already lifted Captain Bayley into a sitting position. "I have taken off his necktie and opened his collar," she said. The butler, who was unaware of Mrs. Holl's presence there, was astonished at the scene.

"Who are you?" he gasped, "and what have you been

doing to the captain? If you have killed him it will be a hanging matter, you know."

"Don't you be a fool," retorted Mrs. Holl sharply, "but run for some water; he has got a stroke, though what it came from is more nor I can tell."

To be called a fool by this unknown woman of coarse appearance roused the butler's faculties. He was sincerely attached to his master, and without reply he at once hurried away for water.

In five minutes the doctor, who lived close by, entered. Mrs. Holl was still holding up the insensible man; Alice stood crying beside her, the servants were looking on.

"Open the windows," he said.

Then he felt the captain's pulse. For some time he stood silent; then he said:

"Lay him down at full length on the couch." Mrs. Holl, without the least effort, lifted the slight figure and laid it on the sofa.

"Now," the doctor said, "will you all leave the room except Miss Hardy and you?" he nodded to Mrs. Holl. As the servants retired reluctantly, the butler said:

"Please, sir, I don't know whether you know it, but that woman was with him alone when he got insensible. I don't know what she did to him, but I should recommend that we should have a policeman in readiness."

"Nonsense," the surgeon said. "However, it will be better that she should retire; but let her wait outside, close at hand, in case he wishes to speak to her."

Sarah Holl followed the servants into the hall. The doctor poured a few drops of cordial between Captain Bayley's lips, and placed some strong salts beneath his nostrils.

"You think he will come round?" Alice asked.

"He will come round," the doctor said confidently; "his pulse is gaining power rapidly. It is not paralysis, but a

sort of fainting fit, brought on, I should imagine, by some sudden shock; his heart is weak, and there was a sudden failure of its powers. I have warned him over and over again not to excite himself. However, I think there is no great harm done this time; but he must be careful in future; another such attack and it might go hard with him. See, he is coming round." In a few minutes Captain Bayley opened his eyes and looked round vaguely.

"Lie quiet for a little while, my dear sir," the doctor said cheerfully; "you have been ill, a sort of fainting fit, but you will be all right in a short time. Drink this glass of cordial." He lifted his patient's head, and held the glass to his lips. As Captain Bayley drank it Alice placed a pillow under his head.

"How was it?" Captain Bayley asked, in a low tone.

"We don't know," the doctor said; "but don't think about it at present. What you have to do now is to get quite strong again; it will be time afterward for you to think what upset you. You have given Miss Hardy here quite a fright."

Captain Bayley nodded to Alice. "I never did such a thing before," he said. "I was reading here in the library ——" Then he stopped, a sudden flush came to his face.

"Don't agitate yourself, my dear sir," the doctor said soothingly, "agitation now would be a very serious thing. Drink a little more of this."

Captain Bayley did as he was told, and then asked:

"Where is the woman who was speaking to me?"

"She is outside," the doctor said. "I told her to wait. But you really must not see her for a time."

"I am all right now," Captain Bayley said, rising to his elbow, "and it will agitate me less to see her than to wait. She brought me very strange news, news which I never thought to hear. It is not bad news, my dear," he said, to Alice, "it is the best news I ever heard. You need not

go away, doctor," he said, seeing the physician was preparing to leave; "you are an old friend, and know all about it; besides, it is no secret. You know how I searched for very many years for my daughter and her child, and came at last to the conclusion that both must be dead, for she was in a dying state when last heard of. Well, I have found that the boy is alive. He has been brought up by the woman who is the mother of a boy who works here."

"Oh! I know," Alice exclaimed, "Frank told me the story. She had told him about a woman who had fallen down at her door, years ago, and how she had brought up the child. But oh, uncle!" she said pitifully, "I have a sad thing to tell you. Frank said that he was such a nice boy, so clever and good. Frank used to go and help him with his books and he can read Latin and all sorts of things; but, uncle, he met with an accident when he was little, and he is a cripple."

For a minute Captain Bayley was silent.

"It is part of my punishment, dear," he said at last. "God's will be done. However, cripple or not, I am thankful to find that, from what you say, he is a boy whom I can own without shame, for the thought has troubled me always, that, should Ella's son be alive, he might have grown up a companion of thieves, a wandering vagabond. Thank God, indeed, it is not so! I am glad you told me, Alice. Now, let me see this good woman who has been a mother to him."

Mrs. Holl was again called in, and was asked to sit down.

"The question you wished to ask me," Captain Bayley said, "was, I suppose, whether I could give you any clew as to who was the woman you took in, and whose child you adopted? She was my daughter."

"Lor', sir!" Mrs. Holl exclaimed, "who would have thought such a thing?"

"Who, indeed," Captain Bayley repeated; "but so it

was. For years I sought for her in vain, and had long since given up all hope of ever hearing of her. Have you got the seal with you?"

After some search Mrs. Holl produced from the corner of her capacious pocket the seal, carefully wrapped up in paper.

"That is it," Captain Bayley said, with a sigh. "Alice, go to my desk, open the inner compartment, and there you will see the fellow to it."

Alice did as he requested.

"There, you see, doctor, they are exactly alike. They were both made at the same time, soon after I returned from India, and now, Mrs. Holl, please tell us the whole story as I understand you told it to my nephew."

Mrs. Holl repeated the story in nearly the same words that she had used to Frank.

"God bless you!" Captain Bayley said, when she finished. "No words can tell how grateful I am to you, or how deeply I am moved at the thought of the kindness which you and your husband, strangers as you were to her, showed to my poor girl. I hope you will not mind sparing him to me now; your claims are far greater than mine, but you have other children, while I, with the exception of my ward here, am alone in the world."

"Lor', sir," Mrs. Holl said, wiping her eyes with her apron, "of course we will spare him. We shall miss him sorely, for he has indeed been a comfort and a blessing to us; but it is for his good, and you won't mind his coming to see us sometimes."

"Mind!" Captain Bayley exclaimed, "he would be an ungrateful rascal if he did not want to come and see you constantly. Well, if you will go home and prepare him a little, I will come round this afternoon and see him. It's no use shaking your head, doctor, I feel myself again now; but I will lie down till lunch-time, and will promise not to excite myself."

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN HOLL, DUST CONTRACTOR.

IT WAS a pathetic meeting between Captain Bayley and his newly found grandson. The latter had been astounded at the wonderful news that Mrs. Holl had brought home. His first thought was that of indignation, that his mother should have been a penniless wanderer in the streets of London, while her father was rolling in wealth; but Mrs. Holl's description of the old officer's agitation and pleasure, and the long efforts which he had made to find his daughter, convinced him that there must at least have been some fault on both sides.

"My poor boy," Captain Bayley said, as he entered the room, "if you knew how long and earnestly I have sought for you, and how many years I have grieved and repented my harshness to your mother, you would not find it in your heart to think hardly of me. We were both to blame, my boy, and we were both punished, heavily punished; but you shall have all the story some day. I know that it must be a bitter thought for you that she died homeless, save for the shelter which this good woman afforded her; but I hope that you will be able to find it in your heart to forgive an old man who has been terribly punished, and that you will let me do my best to atone by making your life as happy as I can."

Harry took the hand which the old officer held out to him.

"For myself, I have nothing to forgive, sir. My life

has been a happy one, thanks to the kindness and love of my father and mother here; as to my real mother, of course, I do not remember her, nor is it for me to judge between her and you. At any rate I can well believe that you must have suffered greatly. I have been thinking it over, and it seems to me that the mere fact that your wishes have at last been carried out, and that you have so strangely found your daughter's son, would seem as if any wrongs you did her are considered by God as atoned for. I am sorry that I am a cripple; I have been sorry before sometimes, but never so sorry as now, for it must be a great disappointment to you."

"I am so pleased at finding you as you are, my boy," Captain Bayley said, "for I had feared that if you were alive it must be as a vagrant, or perhaps even a criminal, that your bodily misfortune is as nothing in my eyes. This is my ward, Miss Hardy; she is something like a granddaughter to me, and is prepared to be a sister to you."

"I have heard of her from Evan, sir," Harry said, with a bright look at the girl. "He has told me how every one in the house loves her, and how fond my kind friend——" But here he stopped abruptly. The tale of Frank's sudden departure was a subject of frequent discussion at the Holls', as well as in the servants' hall in Eaton Square; and although Harry's indignation on behalf of his friend had been extreme, he paused now before uttering the name, for at this first meeting with his relation he felt that no unpleasant topic should be introduced.

There was a moment's silence as he paused, but Alice advanced fearlessly and gave the boy her hand.

"Thank you, Harry, for what you say, and we shall be all the better friends because you love, as do I, my dear good cousin, Frank."

"Well, Harry," Captain Bayley said hastily, "when will you come home to me? I don't want to press you to leave

your kind friends here too suddenly, but I am longing to have you home. I have the carriage at the end of the street if you will come now."

"No, grandfather, not to-day; I will come to-morrow. Father took his dinner away with him, and he will not be back till this evening, and I am not going to let him come and find me gone."

"Quite right, my boy, quite right," Captain Bayley said. "Then to-morrow, at eleven o'clock, I will come round in the carriage and fetch you. Mrs. Holl, remember that Harry Bayley owes you a deep debt of gratitude, which he will do his best some day to repay as far as it is in his power. Good-by, Harry, for the present. I am glad your mother gave you my name; it seems to show she thought kindly of me at the last. Perhaps she found, poor girl, that I had not been altogether wrong in my opposition to her unhappy fancy."

The following day Harry was installed in Eaton Square. Captain Bayley was delighted to find how easily and naturally he fell into the new position, how well he expressed himself, and how wide was his range of knowledge.

"He is a gentleman, every inch," he exclaimed delightedly to Alice. "If you knew how I have thought of him you would understand how happy it makes me to see him what he is."

Captain Bayley lost no time in obtaining the best possible surgical advice for his grandson; their opinion was not as favorable as he had hoped. Had he been properly treated at the time of his accident he might, they said, have made a complete recovery; but now it was too late. However, they thought that by means of surgical appliances, and a course of medicinal baths, he might recover the use of his legs to some extent, and be able to walk with crutches. This was something, and the captain determined at once to carry their advice into effect.

Between Alice Hardy and the lad a strong friendship speedily sprang up. The girl's bright talk, which was so different from anything he had hitherto experienced, was very delightful to the lad; but the strong bond between them was their mutual feeling about Frank. From her Harry learned the charge under which Frank labored, and his indignant repudiation of the possibility of such a thing delighted Alice's heart; hitherto she had been alone in her belief, and it was delightful to her to talk with one who was of her own way of thinking. She infected Harry with her own dislike and suspicions of Fred Barkley, and amused the lad greatly by telling him how, when she had heard of the discovery of his existence, she had, when Mrs. Holl left, gone straight up to her room and indulged in a wild dance of delight at the destruction of Fred's hope of being Captain Bayley's sole heir.

"It was glorious," she said. "I knew Fred hated Frank, though Frank, silly old boy, was always taking his part with me and scolding me because I didn't like his cousin; and I am quite, quite sure that he has had something to do with getting Frank into this dreadful scrape, and it was glorious to think that just when he thought that he had got the field clear, and Uncle Harry all to himself, you should suddenly appear and put his nose out of joint. That's a very unladylike expression, Harry, and I know I oughtn't to use it, but there's nothing else does so well. It's Fred's holidays now, and he is away; I expect uncle will write and tell him all about it. I wish he wouldn't, for I would give anything to see his face when he walks in and sees you sitting here and hears who you are."

"Oh! but I hope," Harry said, "that grandfather won't make any difference to any one because of me. What would be the use of much money to me? Of course I should like to have a little house, with a man to wheel me about; but what could I want beyond that?"

"Oh! nonsense, Harry. In the first place you are going to get better; and even if you were not, you could enjoy life in lots of ways. Of course you would have nice carriages and horses; you might keep a yacht—Frank was always saying that he would like to have a yacht, and I don't see why you shouldn't go into parliament. I am sure you are clever enough, and I have heard uncle say that three-fourths of the members are fools. He says something naughty before fools, but you know he swears dreadfully; he does not mean it, not in the least; I suppose he learned it in India. I tell him it is very wrong sometimes, but he says he is too old to get rid of bad habits. I wish he wouldn't do it; and the worst of it is, Harry," she said plaintively, "that instead of being very much shocked, as I ought to be, very often I can hardly help laughing, he does put in that dreadful word so funnily."

"No, I should not care about being in parliament," the boy said. "If I were ever so rich I think I might like a yacht; still, a yacht, if it were only a small one, would cost a great deal of money, and I do hope that grandfather won't disappoint any one for my sake."

Captain Bayley had, however, a few days after the discovery of his grandson, and after having satisfied himself how lovable the lad was, and how worthy in all respects to be his heir, written to Fred Barkley, telling him that his grandson had been found, and that he was all that he could wish to find him.

"Naturally, Fred," he wrote, "this will make a considerable difference in your prospects. At the same time, as you have been led to believe that you would come into a considerable property at my death, and as you have done nothing to forfeit my confidence and affection, having proved yourself in all ways a steady and industrious and honorable young fellow, I do not consider it right that you should be altogether disinherited by a discovery which has

occasioned me such vast pleasure. I have therefore instructed my solicitor to prepare a new will. By this he will settle my property in Warwickshire, and my town house, upon my grandson; but my other house property, and a portion of my money in stocks and shares, which has been accumulating for many years, will be left to you, the value of the legacy being, I calculate, about one-half of that of the property left to my grandson. Thus you will be in nearly the same position you would have occupied had not your cousin Frank forfeited, by his disgraceful conduct, his place in my affections."

Whatever may have been the feelings of Fred Barkley when he received this communication, he wrote a graceful letter of congratulation to his uncle, expressing his pleasure at the discovery of his long-lost grandson, and with many thanks for his kind intention on his own behalf. His anger and disappointment were so great that he did not return to town until the day before he was going up to Cambridge—having left Westminster at the end of the preceding term—for he did not feel himself equal, before that time, to continue to play his part, and to express personally the sentiments which he had written. What rendered his disappointment even more bitter was the thought that, indirectly, it was Frank who had dealt him the blow, for Captain Bayley had mentioned in his letter that it was through the boy whom his cousin had recommended as an assistant to the footman that the discovery had been made.

The visit that he paid at Eaton Square was a short one. To his relief Alice was not present, for he was certain that she would have watched him with malicious pleasure. But there had been a passage of arms between her and her guardian of a more serious nature than any which had occurred since she had been under his care, owing to her having expressed herself with her usual frankness respecting Fred's visit.

Her guardian had resented this warmly, and had rated her so severely as to what he called her wicked prejudice against Fred, that she had retired to her room in tears. This defeat of his favorite had not predisposed Harry to any more favorable opinion of his unknown cousin; but Fred, relieved from the presence of Alice, acted his part so well, and infused so genuine a ring into the tone of his congratulations, that he did much to dissipate the prejudice with which Harry was prepared to regard him. Alice was quick to observe the impression which Fred had made, and quarreled hotly with Harry concerning it.

"I am disappointed in you altogether, Harry. I have looked upon you as being a real friend of Frank, and now you desert him directly his enemy says a few soft words to you. I despise such friendship, and I don't want to have anything more to say to you."

In vain Harry protested. The girl flung herself out of the room in deep anger, and thenceforth, for a long time, Harry was made to feel that although she wished to be civil to him as her guardian's grandson, yet that the bond of union between them was entirely broken. Harry himself had lost no time in speaking to his grandfather on behalf of Frank.

"My dear Harry," the old man said, "my faith in his innocence was as strong as yours, and, crushing as the proofs seemed to be, I would never have doubted him had he defended himself. But he did not; he never sent me a line to ask me to suspend my judgment or to declare his innocence; he ran away like a thief at night, and, although Fred generously tried to soften the fact to me, there is no doubt he admitted his guilt to him. Still, after the lesson I had in your mother's case, I would forgive him did I know where he was.

"I do not say, Harry, that I would restore him to his place in my affection and confidence, that of course would

be impossible; but I would willingly send him a check for a handsome amount, say for five thousand pounds, to establish him in business, or set him up in a farm in one of the colonies."

"That is no use, grandfather," Harry said, "if he is innocent—as I most firmly believe him to be, in spite of everything against him, and shall believe him to be to my dying day, unless he himself tells me that he was guilty—he will not accept either your forgiveness or your money. What I wish is that he could be found. I wish that I could see him, or that you could see him, face to face, and that we could hear from his own lips what he has to say. He might, at least, account for his foolish running away instead of facing it out.

"We do not know how desperate he might have been at being unable to clear himself from the charge brought against him. Remember, he could not have known how hotly you were working on his behalf, and may have believed himself altogether deserted. He may account for not having written to you. And we must remember, grandfather—mind I do not share all Alice's prejudice, and have no inclination in any way to doubt the honesty of my cousin Fred—but at the same time, in bare justice to Frank, we must not forget that Fred was really a rival of his in your affections, and that he would possibly benefit greatly by Frank's disgrace, and we must also remember that the only evidence against Frank, with the exception of the circumstantial proof, comes from him.

"It was he who furnished Frank with funds to enable him to run away, and we cannot tell whether or not he did not even urge him to fly. You must remember, grandfather, that Alice asserts Fred always hated Frank. I know she is prejudiced and that you never noticed the feeling nor did Frank; but children's perceptions are very quick. And even allowing that she liked Frank much the

best, Fred was always, as she admits, very kind and attentive to her—more so, in some ways, than Frank, and there was no reason, therefore, for her taking up such a prejudice had she not been convinced that it was true.

"Now, grandfather, I will tell you what has occurred to me. I know it will appear a hideously unjust suspicion to you, but I will tell you once for all, and we will not recur to the subject again; God knows I may be wronging him cruelly, but the wrong would be no greater than that which has been done to Frank if he is really innocent.

"Ever since you told me the whole story, I have lain awake at night thinking it over. It may be that what Alice has said may have turned my thoughts that way, but I can see only two explanations of the affair.

"Frank is really guilty, or he is altogether innocent. If he is innocent, who was guilty? Some one took the note, some one sent it to Frank, and this some one must be a person who knew that Frank was in need of it; whoever did so can only have done it with one of two motives, either to get Frank out of trouble, or to bring disgrace upon him. Only four boys knew of the affair, and they all declare that they told no one else. If they spoke truly it was one of these four sent him the note—always supposing that he did not take it himself. Of the other three I know nothing; but I will take the case of Fred and view it as if he was a stranger to both of us.

"He was a rival of Frank's. Alice declares he hated him. At any rate he would benefit greatly by Frank's disgrace. What did he do when Frank asked him to help him? He refused to do so, on the ground that he had no money; but two days later he was able to raise double the sum Frank then wanted in order to assist him to fly. Dreadful as the supposition is, it seems to me that the only positive alternative to supposing Frank to be guilty is to believe that his cousin took this note and sent it to him in

order to bring him into disgrace, and that he afterward urged and assisted him to fly in order to stamp his guilt more firmly upon him."

While Harry had been speaking Captain Bayley had paced up and down the room.

"Impossible, Harry," he exclaimed, "impossible. For, bad as was the case of Frank taking the note on the pressure of the moment to get himself out of the silly scrape into which he had got, this charge which you bring against Fred would be a hundred times, ay, a thousand times worse. It would be a piece of hideous treachery, a piece of villainy of which I can scarce believe a human being capable."

"I do not bring the charge, grandfather," Harry said quietly, "I only state the alternative. That one of your nephews took this note seems to me to be clear; the crime would be infinitely greater, infinitely more unpardonable in the one case than the other, but the incentive, too, was enormously greater. In the one case the only object for the theft would be to avoid the consequence of a foolish, but, after all, not a serious freak; in the other to obtain a large fortune, and to ruin the chances of a dangerous rival.

"Remember, at that time Fred did not know how you had determined to dispose of your property. Frank was living with you, and was apparently your favorite, therefore he may have deemed that it was all or nothing. There, grandfather, I have done. I need not say that I know little of the real disposition of your two nephews. Frank behaved to me with the greatest kindness when I was a poor cripple without the slightest claim upon him. Fred has behaved kindly and courteously, although I have come between him and you. I can only say that I believe that one of these two must be guilty; which it is, God alone knows."

"I wish you had said nothing about it," Captain Bayley

groaned, "it is dreadful; I don't know what to do or what to think."

"There is nothing to be done," Harry said, "except, grandfather, to find Frank. Let us find him and see him face to face; let us hear his story from beginning to end, and I think then we shall arrive at a just conclusion. I have no doubt he has gone abroad, and I should advise that you should advertise in all the Colonial and American papers begging him to return to have an interview with you, and offering a handsome reward to any one who will give you information of his whereabouts. If we find where he is, and he will not come to us, we will go to him."

"That's what I will do, Harry. I will not lose a moment's time, but will set about it at once; if I spend ten thousand pounds in advertising I will find him. As to Fred, I cannot meet him again until I get to the bottom of the affair, so we will stay away from England till I get some news of Frank."

Before starting abroad, Captain Bayley carried out his plan for rewarding John and Sarah Holl for the kindness they had shown to Harry. After consultation with his grandson, he had concluded that the best plan of doing so would be to help them in their own mode of life. He accordingly called upon the dust-contractor for whom John Holl worked, a man who owned twenty carts. An agreement was soon come to with him, by which Captain Bayley agreed to purchase his business at his own price, with the whole of the plant, carts, and horses. A fortnight after this John's master said to him one day:

"John, I have sold my business, you are going to have a new master."

"I am sorry for that," John said, "for we have got on very well together for the last fifteen years. Besides," he added thoughtfully, "it may be a bad job for me; I am not as young as I used to be, and he may bring new hands with him."

"I will speak to him about you, John," his master said; "he is a good sort, and I dare say I can manage it. The thing is going to be done well. Three or four new carts are going to be put on instead of some of the old ones, and there are ten first-rate horses coming in place of some of those that are getting past work. The stables are all being done up, and the thing is going to be done tip-top. Curiously enough his name is the same as yours, John Holl."

"Is it now?" John said. "Well, that will be a rum go, to see my own name on the carts, 'John Holl, Dust Contractor.' It don't sound bad neither. So you will speak to him, gaffer?"

"Ay, I will speak to him," his employer answered.

Three days later John received a message from his master to the effect that the new gaffer would take possession next day, and that he was to call at the office at eleven o'clock. He added that his new employer said that he wished Mrs. Holl to go round with her husband.

John and Sarah were greatly mystified with the latter part of this message, until the solution occurred to them that probably their late employer had mentioned that Mrs. Holl went out charring and cleaning, and that he might intend to engage her to keep the office tidy.

Accordingly, at eleven o'clock on the following day, John and Sarah presented themselves at the office at Chelsea. As they entered the yard they were greatly amused at seeing all the carts ranged along, in the glory of new paint, with "John Holl, Dust Contractor," in large letters on their sides. A boy was in the office, who told them that they were to go to the house. The yard was situated near the river, and the house which adjoined it was a large old-fashioned building, standing in a pretty, walled garden. They went to the back door, and knocked. It was opened by a bright-looking servant-girl.

"Is Mr. Holl in?" Sarah asked.

"You are to be shown in," the girl said, and ushered them into a large, old-fashioned parlor, comfortably furnished.

John and Sarah gave a cry of surprise, for, sitting by the fire, in his wheeled box, just as in the olden time, was Harry.

Scarce a day had passed since he had left them without his coming in for a half-hour for a chat with them, but his appearance here struck them with astonishment.

"What on arth be you a-doing here, Harry?" Mrs. Holl asked. "Do you know our new gaffer?"

"Yes, mother, I know him. Captain Bayley has had some business with him, and asked me to come down here to see him. You are to sit down until he comes."

"But that will never do, Harry. Why, what would he think of us if he comes in and finds us sitting down in his parlor just as if the place belonged to us?"

"It's all right, mother, I will make it right with him; he's a good fellow, is the new gaffer—a first-rate fellow."

"Is he, now?" John asked, interested, as he and Sarah, seeing nothing else to do, sat down. "And his name is John Holl, just the same as mine?"

"Just the same, John, and he's not unlike you either. Now, when I tell you what a kind action he did once, you will see the sort of fellow he is. Once, a good many years ago, when he wasn't as well off as he is now, when he was just a hard-working man, earning his weekly pay, a poor woman with a child fell down dying at his door. Well, you know, other people would have sent for a policeman and had her taken off to the workhouse, but he and his wife took her into their house and tended her till she died."

"That was a right-down good thing," John said, quite oblivious of the fact that he too had done such an action.

Sarah did not speak, but gave a little gasping cry, and threw her apron, which she wore indoors and out, over her

head, a sure sign with her that she was going to indulge in what she called "a good cry." John looked at her in astonishment.

"And more that that, John," Harry went on, "they took in the child, and brought it up as one of their own; and though afterward they had a large family, they never made him feel that he was a burden to them, though he grew up a cripple, and was able to do nothing to repay them for all their goodness. Well, at last the boy's friends were found. They had lots of money, and the time came at last when they bought a business for John Holl; and when he came, there the cripple boy was, sitting at the fire, to welcome them and say, 'Welcome, father! and welcome, mother!'" and Harry held out his hands to them both.

Even now John Holl did not understand. He was naturally dull of comprehension, and the loud sobbing of his wife so bewildered and confounded him that it divided his attention with Harry's narrative.

"Yes, Harry," he said, "it's all very nice. But what's come to you, Sarah? What are you making all this fuss about? We shall be having the new master coming in and finding you sobbing and rocking yourself like a madwoman. Cheer up, old woman. What is it?"

"Don't you see, John," Sarah sobbed out, "don't you see Harry has been telling you your own story? Don't you see that it is you he has been talking about, and that you are 'John Holl, Dust Contractor?'"

"Me?" John said, in utter bewilderment.

"Yes, father," Harry said, taking his hand, "you are the John Holl. This house, and the business, and the carts and horses, are yours; Captain Bayley has bought them all for you. He would not come here himself, as I wished him, but he asked me to tell you and mother how glad he was to be able to repay, in a small way, he said,

your great kindness to me, and how he hoped that you would prosper here, and be as happy as you deserve to be. You will be better off than your last gaffer, for he had to pay rent for this house and yard, but, as grandfather has bought the freehold of them all for you, you will have no rent to pay; and therefore I hope, even in bad times, you will be able to get along comfortably. There, father, there, mother, dry your eyes, and look sharp, for I can hear voices in the garden. Evan went to your house after you had gone to bring all the children round here in a cab.

"You will find everything in the house, mother, and you must get a grand tea as soon as possible. I have got a servant for you—for, you know, you must have a servant now."

The next minute the children came bounding in, wild with delight, and a happier party never assembled than those who sat round the table of "John Holl, Dust Contractor," on the evening of his first taking possession of his new property.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LONELY DIGGERS.

THE CAMP increased rapidly, for although no extraordinarily rich finds were made, the valley bottom widened out at this point, and the gold was generally disseminated in quantities sufficient to enable the miners to live, and every one hoped that, as they got deeper, their claims would increase in value. Every day added to the number of tents and huts. Three bars competed with each other for the favor of the diggers, and two large stores drove a profitable trade in food and mining tools and materials; brawls at the gambling-tables were of nightly occurrence, and no small proportion of the gold obtained by the more fortunate diggers found its way into the pockets of the gamblers.

"I tell you what, Abe," Frank said, a short time after their arrival, when they heard that a young man had been shot down by one of the most notorious ruffians in the camp, "I think it would be a good plan if we were all to agree that we will not enter one of these saloons. I know it's a temptation, after work is over, to saunter in there; but I think such a party as we are are enough for each other. We have done well enough for months out on the plains, and I don't see why we should not do so now. We are friends, and should be awfully sorry to see any one of our number losing his share of our joint earnings at the gambling-tables, or brought home with a bullet-hole in his head.

"If we want a little change, we can always ask one or two of the quiet men to join us round our fire. If we want drink, it is cheaper and better to buy it by the bottle, and have a glass in company here. There is no doubt that any one who takes to drink here may as well hang himself at once, for he will never do any good. I don't know that any of us are inclined that way, but I think it would be a good plan to enter into a sort of agreement with each other that, as long as we are in partnership, none of us shall enter a saloon or stake a dollar in play."

"I agrees with you, Frank. Time has been when I have gone in for as heavy sprees as any one. I don't think as I am likely to do it again, but I am sure that an agreement like that would be a good thing for me as well as the others. What do yer say, boys?"

"The only thing is," Peter suggested, "that we might, one or other, very well get into a bad quarrel by refusing to drink when we are asked. You see it's pretty nigh a deadly offense to refuse to drink with a man; and if it got noticed that none of us ever went into a bar, there are men here who would make a point of asking us to drink just for the sake of making a quarrel if we refused."

"I allow there's something in that," Abe said; "there's no surer way of getting into a mess among a set of men like this than in refusing to drink."

"Well, if that's the case," Frank said, "we must modify the arrangement, and agree that none of us will go into a bar unless actually asked to go and take a drink—that wouldn't be very often, the invitation is generally given inside. We come back from work about the same time that every one else knocks off, and they are not thinking of going to the bars till they have had a meal, and when we are once quietly seated round the fire here no one is very likely to ask any of us to get up and go off to one of the saloons."

The suggestion was adopted, and all bound themselves not to enter a saloon to drink or gamble unless invited to take a drink under circumstances in which a refusal would be taken in bad part.

"I am mighty glad you proposed that," Abe said, afterward. "Rube is all right, but Peter and Dick are both of 'em fond of going on a spree now and then, and this may keep them from it. I told 'em when we started that I was ready to go partners as long as they kept from drink, but I wasn't going to tie myself up with any one as was going in for that. When we dissolves partnership each one will have a right to do with his share what he likes; he can gamble it away, or drink it away, or fool it away as he chooses, but no man as drinks over night will do his fair share of work next day. Besides, luck may at any time go agin us, and we may have to fall back on what we have laid by when times were good; and if any one had been and spent his share he couldn't be looking to the others to support him. Besides, as I pinted out, we might want all the money we has got atween us to buy up a claim in a good place. They agreed to it, and so far they have kept to it; not, of course, as they had much chance to do otherwise on the way. Still, I think this fresh agreement's likely to do good. We are working here on shares, and each man is bound to do his best for the others."

After sitting by the fire for some time of an evening, Frank generally got up and strolled round the camp, accompanied by Turk. There were many phases of life presented to him. While the successful diggers were drinking and gambling in the saloons, there were many who could barely keep life together. It was true this was in most cases their own fault, for men willing to work could earn their five dollars a day by laboring in the claims of wealthier or more successful diggers; but many would hold on to their own claims, hoping against hope, and

believing always that the ground would get richer as they went down.

Frank chatted freely with all, and he and his great dog were soon known to every one in camp. He was able to do many little acts of kindness to those whose luck was bad; for on arriving at the end of the journey each of the party had, at Abe's suggestion, put twenty dollars into the common fund, and beyond this amount the sum he had brought with him from Omaha was still untouched; and many a man who would otherwise have gone to bed supperless after a hard day's work, was indebted to him for the means of procuring a few pounds of flour and a pound or two of pork.

His attention had been particularly attracted to two men who lived in a small tent a hundred yards away from any of the others, and who worked a claim by themselves. They did not seem to have any communication with the rest of the diggers, and kept themselves entirely apart. While at work Frank had heard several jeering remarks as to the absurdity of working a claim in a part of the ground which had over and over again been tried and abandoned, and Frank felt sure that the men were doing badly.

One day he observed that only one of the men was at work, the younger of the two; and as he continued to wield his shovel after the others had thrown down their tools for the evening, Frank walked over to him.

"Is your partner ill?" he asked. "I see he is not working with you to-day."

The man nodded, but continued his work without speaking. He was evidently indisposed for conversation.

"Why I asked," Frank said, "was not for mere curiosity, but because we have brought up with us from Sacramento a few bottles of fever medicine, and other things likely to be wanted here, and if any of them would be of use you will be heartily welcome to them. We ought all

to help each other, for no one knows whether he himself may not want a helping hand next."

"Thank you," the man said, somewhat gruffly; "we shall get on all right, and my mate isn't fond of strangers."

"I need not trouble him myself," Frank said; "I can bring you round any medicines here, and you can give them to him without saying how you got them."

"Thank you; medicine wouldn't do him any good," the man said, and resumed his work as if anxious to avoid further conversation.

Frank, however, was not to be discouraged. The man looked thin and haggard, and Frank suspected that it might be food rather than medicine of which the man's mate was in need. He therefore stood his ground.

"I am afraid you haven't hit on a very good spot," he said. "I don't know much about it myself, for I have only been here about a month; but I hear every one say that there have been several trials made here, and that none of them have found anything to speak of."

"We must work where we can," the man said. "The places were pretty well all taken up when we came, and it didn't suit us to go further."

"Well," said Frank, "I don't want to be inquisitive, mate, or to interfere in other people's affairs, but I noticed your mate looked an elderly man, and that you seemed pretty much alone. I am only just out here myself, and I and the party I am working with are doing fairly; so I thought it would be only neighborly to come over and see if I could be of use in any way."

"No, thank you," the man repeated; "there's nothing we want."

Frank saw that at present he could do nothing; but he had little doubt that the two men were really suffering severely. Still he understood and respected their pride and with a friendly "Good evening" strolled off to his own hut.

The next evening he again went round to the solitary workman.

"How is your mate?" he asked.

The man shook his head. "He's pretty bad."

The tone was softer and less repellent than that which he had used the evening before. He was a young man of not more than three or four-and-twenty, and Frank saw that his lip quivered as he turned away from him and dug his shovel into the ground.

"If your mate is worse," Frank said, "you have no right to refuse my offer. I cannot help feeling that you are doing badly; in that case, why should you not let me lend you a hand? There's no disgrace in being unlucky. Here men are unlucky one week, and make a rich strike on the week following, and then they can lend a hand to others, just as a hand may have been lent to them when they wanted it. I think by your accent that you are an Englishman, and an educated one, just as I am myself. Why on earth don't you let me be a friend to you?"

The man did not reply; but Frank could guess by the random way in which he was doing his work, that a struggle was going on.

"He would not hear of it," he said at last.

"Then don't let him hear of it," Frank said promptly. "If he has any mistaken ideas about taking help from a stranger, the sort of ideas one would naturally have at home, and is ill and wants something, we must help him in spite of himself. If, as I suspect, he needs other matters as well as medicine, you should provide him, even if it be necessary to carry out a little harmless deception."

"I would not tell him a lie," the man said, almost fiercely.

"No, there's no occasion for that," Frank went on. "You can tell him that you have come across that nugget in the claim," and Frank tossed into the hole a nugget for

which he had half an hour before given a digger ten dollars from his own store.

For a moment the man stood irresolute, and then burst into a passion of tears. Frank saw that he had gained the day, and saying, "I will come round for a chat to-morrow afternoon. That's my camp up there—that tent just on the ridge. I have really medicines, if you think they will be of any use," strolled away to his supper. He glanced round when he had gone a little distance, and saw the digger running at full speed toward the solitary tent.

The next evening the young man dropped his shovel as he approached him, and came to meet him.

"I did not thank you last night," he began.

"Nonsense," Frank said, interrupting; "there is no occasion whatever for thanks. Why, it's the custom here, whenever any one is taken ill, or is unfortunate, and has to move on, a few friends, or, as it often happens, a few strangers, will each chip in a pinch of gold dust to help him on. It's the rule here that we stand by each other, and being both Englishmen, it is natural we should lend each other a hand. How is your mate?"

"He is a good deal better, thanks to the food I was able to get for him; for, as you guessed, we have been nearly starving the last fortnight."

"But why did you keep on working at such a place as this?" Frank asked. "Why didn't you go on wages? There are plenty of men here who would be glad to take on an extra hand if they could get him."

The young man hesitated

"I know it must seem utter folly," he said at last, "but the fact is my partner has a fixed idea that claim will turn out well; he dreamed it."

"Pooh!" Frank said; "diggers are constantly dreaming about lucky places—and no wonder, when they are always thinking about them. I consider it madness to keep on

toiling here, even if your mate is ill. It is folly to give in to him in this way, and for you both to be half-starved when you can earn, at any rate, enough to keep you both by working for others."

"That is just what I knew you would say," the young man replied, "and I feel it myself, thoroughly."

"Then why on earth do you keep on doing it?"

"I have a reason, a very particular reason, though I am not at liberty to explain it."

"Well, then, there's no more to be said," Frank replied, vexed at what he regarded as obstinate folly. He talked for a few minutes, and then strolled away, and for the next two days did not go near the digger who seemed so bent on slaving uselessly.

The third day Frank noticed that the man was not at work on his claim. As soon as he knocked off in the evening he walked across to the spot. The tools still lay in the hole, showing that the claim had not been abandoned, although work had temporarily ceased.

Next day the claim was still unworked; the tent stood in its place, showing that the diggers had not moved away. Although, from their previous conversation, Frank thought that he might not improbably meet with a repulse, after work was done he strolled over to the tent.

"Are you in, mate?" he asked, outside. "Seeing you were not at work for the last two days, I thought I would walk over and ask you if anything was the matter."

The young man came out from the tent; he looked utterly worn-out.

"My father has been too ill for me to leave him," he said, in a low tone. "I spoke of him as my mate before, but he is my father."

"Can I do anything?" Frank asked.

"No, thank you; I don't think any one can do anything. If there were a doctor in camp, of course I should

call him in; but I don't think it would be of any use. He's broken down, altogether broken down. We don't want for anything, thanks to your kindness."

"You look worn-out yourself," Frank said.

"I suppose I do. I have not lain down for the past five days."

"Then," Frank said, "I insist on taking your place to-night. Is he sensible?"

The young man shook his head.

"Sometimes, for a little while, I think he knows where he is, but most of the time he lies perfectly still, or just talks to himself."

"Very well, then," Frank said, "he will not know the difference. Besides, you can lie down in the tent, and I can wake you at once if there is any occasion."

The man hesitated; but he was too worn-out to resist, and he made no opposition as Frank entered the tent. An elderly man lay stretched upon some blankets, one of which was thrown loosely over him. Frank stooped and put his fingers on his wrist. He could scarcely feel the pulse.

"What have you been giving him?"

"I got a piece of fresh meat and boiled it down into broth."

"Have you given him any stimulants? I think he wants keeping up."

"He never touches them," the young man said.

"All the better," Frank replied; "they will have all the more effect upon him as medicine. If you will wait here a few minutes, I will go up to my tent and fetch down a blanket and a few things. I will be with you in ten minutes."

Frank briefly announced to his comrades that he was going to sit up for the night with a sick man. He put a bottle containing a glass or two of brandy in his pocket,

and went into a store and purchased some lemons and a piece of fresh beef; this he took back to the camp fire, and asked Abe to put it on and let it simmer all night in the ashes, in just enough water to cover it, and then to strain it in the morning, and bring the broth across to what was known in the camp as the "lonely tent." He took a small phial of laudanum and quinine from the store of medicines, to use if they might appear likely to be needed, and then went back to the tent.

"Now," he said to the young man, "you lie down at once. If you are wanted I will be sure and wake you. I shall make myself comfortable, never fear; one of my mates will bring me down a pannikin of tea the last thing."

He squeezed one of the lemons into a tin drinking-cup, and added water and a few spoonfuls of brandy, and, with a spoon he had brought down with him, poured some of it between the old man's lips.

"I don't know whether it's right," he thought to himself, "but it's the best thing I can do for him. It is evident he must be kept up. When Abe comes down I will ask his advice; after knocking about as many years as he has been, he ought to know what is the best thing to be done."

In half an hour he gave the patient a few spoonfuls of the broth which had been prepared, and continued every half-hour to give him the lemonade and broth alternately.

When Abe came down with the tea Frank went outside to meet him, and explained some of the circumstances of the case, and then took him in to see his patient.

"I think you are doing the right thing, lad," Abe said, when they went out into the air again. "He is evidently pretty nigh gone under. I expect he has been working beyond his strength, and starving, like enough, at that. He's regular broke up, and has got the fever besides. I should just keep on at that till morning, and then we shall

see; if he gets on raving you might give him a few drops of laudanum with his brandy, but I wouldn't do it otherwise. I will bring down that broth first thing in the morning, it will be a sight stronger than that stuff you are giving him now."

Fortified by this opinion, Frank lit his pipe, and sat down to his long watch. He was the more satisfied that he was doing right by the fact that the pulse was distinctly stronger than it had been when he first felt it. Occasionally the patient muttered a few words, but he generally lay perfectly still, with his eyes staring wide open. It was this fixed stare that tempted Frank at last to give him a few drops of laudanum, and in an hour later he had the satisfaction of seeing him close his eyes.

Abe was round soon after daylight, with two pannikins of tea, some rashers of bacon, and a jug of the essence of beef.

"How is your patient, Frank?"

"I can't tell, except by his pulse; but that certainly seems to me to be stronger. I gave him a few drops of laudanum a couple of hours ago, and it seems to me he has been dozing since; at any rate his eyes have been half-closed. I think that it is extreme weakness more than anything else; he has overtaxed his strength, and is worn out with fatigue and starvation. I shouldn't be surprised if he gets round all right with quiet and food." The opening of the tent, and the sound of voices outside, roused the younger digger, who had slept without stirring from the moment he had lain down. He joined the others outside.

"How I have slept!" he said. "I can't tell you how much I am obliged to you; I was regularly done up, and now I shall be able to take a fresh start again."

"My partner, Abe, here, has just brought us down some tea and breakfast, and some really strong soup for your

mate." For Frank did not know whether the young man would wish the fact of the relationship between him and his companion generally known.

"Thank you, heartily," the young man said, as he seated himself by the side of Frank, on the stump of a felled tree, and took the tea and food from Abe's hands.

"I feel ready to go on again now; but last night I quite broke down. I have no one to speak to, you see, and it was awful to see him lying there, and to be able to do nothing. Your friend here," and he nodded to Frank, "had been so kind to us a week ago, that I felt sure he would not mind sitting up with him, though I know he thought me a fool to go on digging at that wretched hole. I think he looks"—and he motioned to the tent—"a little better this morning. Of course there's not much change; but his face does not look quite as it did yesterday. I don't know what the difference is, but I am sure there is a difference."

"His pulse is certainly a little stronger," Frank said, "and I hope we shall pull him round, though I did not think so when I saw him yesterday. I have been giving him broth every hour, and a few spoonfuls of lemonade with brandy in it between times, and I think the brandy has done him more good than the soup; if I were in your place, I would go on doing just the same to-day. This soup Abe has brought down is very strong, and two or three spoonfuls at a time will be all he will want; there is another lemon in there, and I would go on giving him brandy too; I think it's just strength he wants."

"Strength and hope," the young man said. "He has all along made up his mind that claim would pay, and I think its failure did more to break him down than even the fatigue and want of food; that was why I kept on working as long as he was sensible. He still believed in it, and would not hear of my stopping to nurse him. He was very

bad that night I went home with the nugget, almost as bad as he was last night; but when I showed it him he seemed to revive, and it was only when three days passed without my being able to show another speck of gold that he fell back again."

"Oh! you did find a nugget, then?" Abe said. "No one thought you would strike on anything thar."

"I found it because your friend put it there," the young man said, "and he saved both our lives, for we were starving."

Abe grunted.

"You shouldn't have kept it so dark, lad. We ain't bad fellows, we diggers, though we are a rough lot, and no one need starve in a mining camp. But no doubt you had your reasons," he added, seeing the miner's face blush up. "But what on arth made your mate stick to that thar hole? Any one could have seen with half an eye that it wasn't a likely place."

"He has a sort of belief in dreams, and he dreamed three times, as he told me, of a stunted tree with gold underneath it. We have been to half the mining camps in the country, and never had any luck; but directly he came here he saw a tree standing just where our claim is, and he declared it was the one he dreamed of. I told him then it didn't seem a likely place to work, but he would have it that it was the tree, and that there was gold under it. He was already weak and ill, and to please him I set to work there. I may tell you, as I have told your friend, that he is my father; there is no reason that there should be any mystery about it, and my only reason for wishing that it should not be generally known is that he had a sort of fancy against it."

"I guessed as much, young man," Abe said, "when I saw you working together three weeks ago. A young man don't tie himself to an old partner who ain't no more good

than a child at work unless there's some reason for it, and there's many a father and son, ay, and a father and four or five sons, working together in every mining camp here. Still, if the old man has a fancy agin it we will say naught on the subject. So he dreamed three times of the tree, did he? Well, then, I don't blame him for sticking to the claim; I don't suppose there are a dozen miners in this camp who wouldn't have done the same. I believes there's something in dreams myself; most of us do. And he recognized the tree directly, you say? Wall, it's time for my mate and I to be off to work, but this evening I will walk round and have a look at your claim; thar may be somewhat in it, arter all."

"You don't really believe in dreams, Abe?" Frank said, as they walked off together.

"I think thar's something in 'em," Abe said. "I have heard many a queer story about dreams, and I reckon thar ain't many men as has lived out all thar lives in the plains as doubts thar's something in 'em. The Injins believe in 'em, and, though they ain't got no books to larn 'em, the Injins ain't fools in their own way. I have known a score of cases where dreams came true."

"Yes, I dare say you have," Frank said; "but then there are tens of thousands of cases in which dreams don't come true. A man dreams, for instance, that his wife, or his mother, or some one he cares for, is dead; when he gets home he finds her all right, and never thinks any more about the dream, or says anything about it. If in one case out of ten thousand he finds she is dead, he tells every one about his dream, and it is quoted all about as an instance that dreams come true."

"Yes, perhaps there's something in that," Abe agreed. "But I think there's more than that too. I know a case of a chap who was out in the plains hunting for a caravan on its way down to Santa Fé. There weren't, as far as he

knew, any Injins about, and what thar was had always shown themselves friendly and peaceable. He laid down by the fire and went to sleep, and he dreamed that a party of Injins scalped him. He woke in a regular sweat from fright, and he was so badly scared that he scattered the ashes of his fire and took to his horse, and led him into a cedar bush close by. He hadn't been thar twenty minutes when he heard tramping of horses, and along came a party of Injins. They halted not twenty yards away from where his fire had been, and camped till the morning, and then rode on again. He could see by thar dress and paint they were up to mischief, and the very next day they fell upon a small caravan and killed every soul. Now that man's dream saved his life; thar warn't no doubt about that. If he hadn't had warning, and had time to scatter his fire, and move quiet into the bush, and get a blanket over his horse's head to prevent its snorting, it would have been all up with him; and I could tell you a dozen tales like that."

"I think that could be accounted for," Frank said. "The man perhaps was sleeping with his ear on the ground, and in his sleep may have heard the tramping of the Indians' horses as they went over a bit of stony ground, long before he could hear them when he arose to his feet, and the noise set his brain at work, and he dreamed the dream you have told me. But I know from what I have heard that gold-miners are, almost to a man, full of fancies and superstitions, and that they will often take up claims from some idea of luck rather than from their experience and knowledge of ground."

After the work was over Abe and Frank went down to the claim.

"Well, I am free to own," Abe said, "that I don't see no chance of gold here; it's clear out of the course of the stream."

Frank was silent for two or three minutes, and then said:

"Well, Abe, you know I put no faith whatever in a dream, but if you look at that sharp curve in the opposite bank higher up, you will see that it is quite possible that in the days when this was a river instead of being a mere stream, it struck that curve and came over by where we are standing now. As the water decreased it would naturally find its way down the middle of the valley, as it does now; but I think it likely enough that in the old times it flowed under where we are standing."

"By gosh, lad, I think you are about right. What do you say to our taking up the claims next to this? We are not doing much more than paying our way where we are, and it's the horses who are really earning the money."

"I don't know, Abe. We are a good deal above the present bed of the stream, and should probably have to sink a considerable distance before we got down to paying ground; that young fellow said they have hardly found a speck of gold. It would be a risky thing to do; still, we can think it over, there's no hurry about it."

That night Abe insisted on taking his turn to sit up with the old man. The son, who had now told them that his name was James Adams, urged that the previous night's long sleep had quite set him up again, but Abe would not listen to him.

"It's done you good, lad, no doubt, but ye will be all the better for another. It wants more than one night's sleep when you have had four or five out of bed, and a night's watch is nothing one way or other to me. You just do as you are told."

So James Adams had another long night's sleep, while Abe sat by his father.

There was no doubt now that the old man was recovering from the exhaustion which had brought him to death's door; the set, pinched look of his features was passing away, and the evening following Abe's watch, when Frank

went round to the tent to inquire how he was getting on, the son came out and said:

"He is better. He went off this morning in what looked like a natural sleep, and when he woke, an hour ago, I could see that he knew me. I don't suppose he knew he had been lying insensible for a week, but thought I had just come back from work. He whispered, 'How does it look to-day, Jim?' and after what you told me about what you thought about the old course of the river, I was able to say honestly, 'I think the chances look more favorable.' He whispered, 'We shall make a fortune yet, Jim,' and then drank some soup and went off to sleep again. To-morrow morning I will set to work again. I don't believe a bit in the dream myself, but it will make him more comfortable to know that I am at work upon it; and after all it may turn out some good."

"My partners have more faith in it than I have," Frank said. "Abe told them about the dream, and about what I had noticed of the probable course of the river in the olden times, and I have a proposal to make to you. We will take up five claims by the side of your two, two on one side and three on the other; then three of us will help you sink your shaft. All that's found in your claims will be yours; and if it turns out rich you shall pay us just as if we had been working for you by the day. When we have cleared out your claims we are to have the right of using your shaft for working right and left along the bottom over our claims. I think that's a fair offer."

"I think it's more than fair; it is most kind," the young man said. "You are risking getting nothing for your labor if it turns out poor."

"Yes, we are risking that," Frank agreed, "but we are not doing ourselves much good now. The two who are working the horses earn enough to keep the five of us, and if by any chance your claims should turn out well, we shall

be paid for our work for you, and will be able to work out our own claims very cheaply; if we sunk a shaft on our own account we should similarly lose our labor if it turned out poor, and should not get so much if it turned out rich. So I think the bargain is really a fair one; and if you do not agree, my mates have quite resolved to sink a shaft on their own account on the strength of your father's dream."

"In that case I agree most heartily," James Adams said, "and it will gladden my father's heart to be told that the work is now to go on really in earnest."

"If he is better to-morrow," Frank said, "it will be as well to get your father's consent to the agreement, and then we will begin on the following day."

The next morning the old man woke up a good deal better. His first question, after he had taken some soup, was:

"How is it you aren't at work, Jim? It's broad daylight."

"I have knocked off for to-day, father, I wanted to have a chat with you. A party of five miners, who have been very kind to me while you have been ill—for you have been ill now for more than a week, though you don't know it—have made me a very good offer, although I could not accept it until I consulted you. You see I cannot get on much with the claim by myself; the ground falls in and wants timbering, and I can do nothing alone. Well, these miners have offered to help sink our shaft, on the conditions that they get no pay if it turns out poor, but if it turns out well they are to be paid for their daily labor, and when we have worked out our claims they are to have the right of using our shaft for working out the claims they have staked out next to ours."

"No shares, Jim," the old man said; "you are sure they are not to have any share in our claims, because I won't agree to that."

"No, father; the agreement is just as I told you. If it turns out well they get their wages and the right to use our shaft to get at their claims."

"Very well, I will agree to that; we shall get down all the sooner to our gold. But mind, have it put down on paper, else they will be setting up a claim to a share in our treasure."

"I will get it done regularly, father," Jim said. "They mean very fairly. As I told you, they have shown me the greatest kindness—indeed you owe your life to them, for if it had not been for them, I had, as you know, no means whatever of holding on. While you have been ill two of them have been sitting up with you at night. They have showed themselves true friends."

"Well, I am glad you have found some friends, Jim," the old man said feebly. "But you must be careful, you know, very careful, and be sure the agreement is signed and witnessed properly."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DREAM VERIFIED.

ON THE following morning, to the astonishment of the miners of Cedar Camp, Frank and his companions took their tools out of their claims and shifted to the claims of the two men of the "solitary tent." Every one asked himself what could be the meaning of this move, and the general supposition was that they must have discovered that the two men had struck upon rich ground. Scores of miners sauntered across during the day, looked on, and asked a question or two; but the answers they obtained threw no light upon the mystery. The ground looked most unpromising; it was a flat some ten feet above the level of the river-bed, and the spot where they were digging was twenty yards from the edge.

Fifteen yards further back the ground rose abruptly to a height of thirty or forty feet; the ground around was covered with bushes, through which a few good-sized trees rose. The two men had dug through two feet of alluvial soil, and about five feet of sand. Altogether, it was a place which seemed to afford no promise whatever; and although, at the first impulse, some miners who were doing badly had marked out claims next to those staked out by Frank and his party, no steps were taken to occupy them.

The first day was spent in getting out planks and lining the proposed shaft, which was made much smaller than the hole already dug, which extended over the whole of the

two claims. The next day a windlass was put in position, and the work began in earnest. At the depth of twenty feet they came upon gravel, a result which greatly raised their spirits, as its character was precisely similar to that in the bed of the stream, and showed that Frank's conjecture was a correct one, and that the river had at one time flowed along the foot of the high ground beyond.

When it was known in camp that the party were getting up gravel, there was a great deal of talk. Some of the older hands came and examined the place, and, noticing the sharp curve in the opposite bank above, concluded, as Frank had done, that instead of being, as was generally supposed, beyond the edge of the old river-bed, it was by no means improbable that the party were working over what was at one time a point which was swept by the main body of water coming down.

More claims were staked out, and although no one had any intention of beginning in earnest until they discovered what luck attended the party who were sinking the shaft, just enough was done each day to retain possession of the claims. Before they had gone far into the gravel they discovered specks of gold, and, washing a basinful from time to time, found that it was fairly rich, certainly as good as any that had been found a few feet below the surface of the ground at any other spot in the camp. They determined, however, not to wash at present, but to pile the stuff near the mouth of the shaft, to be washed subsequently, and to continue to sink steadily.

A fortnight after the work had begun the old man had gained sufficient strength to make his way across to the shaft, and after that he spent his whole time watching the progress of the work. His tent was brought over and pitched close at hand. By this time, as their prospects really looked good, Jim had told him the true history of the nugget he had brought home, and how much they

owed to Frank; and he so far overcame his shrinking from intercourse with his neighbors as to become really cordial with Frank, who, when supper was over, often strolled across and smoked a pipe with Jim in the tent.

Frank often wondered what could have brought a man of some sixty years of age, and evidently well educated, and a gentleman, but, as was equally clear, wholly unfitted by age, habits, and constitution for rough labor in such a country as that. The son had not denied that he was English, but as he had not admitted it in so many words, Frank thought that his father might object to any questions on the subject, and in their many conversations the past was seldom alluded to.

Turk, who was Frank's constant companion, took remarkably to the old man, and in the daytime, when the latter was sitting watching the baskets coming up from below, generally took up his position by him, sometimes lying blinking lazily in the sun, at other times sitting up and watching the operations gravely, as if he were thoroughly aware of their importance.

While the ground was still unpromising, Frank and his party had bought up, for a few dollars, the claims of several of the men who had staked out ground next to their own, and now held six on either side of the claim they were sinking on. Beyond these, as soon as the gravel was known to contain gold, other miners began to work—for the most part in parties, as the depth at which paying ground lay beneath the surface was so great that it could only be reached by joint labor—and the flat so long neglected now became one of the busiest points in the camp.

"The gravel is getting richer and richer every day," Frank said to the elder Adams, five weeks after they began work. "I think now it would be as well to hire half a dozen men to carry it down to the stream and wash it there; you could superintend them, and one of us will

work at the cradle. The stuff will pay splendidly now, I am sure, and there's a big heap on the bank."

"If you think so, by all means let us do so," the old man said. "I should like to begin to get some gold; we are in your debt more than a hundred dollars already, since you have been advancing money for our living as the work has gone on."

"There is no hurry on that account," Frank said. "Ever since we washed the first pail of gravel it has been evident that there was at least sufficient gold to pay for washing out, and that my advances were perfectly safe; so there is no hurry on that account. But at present it has so improved that it would be rich enough to pay really well; besides, we shall be getting it stolen. I fancy last night two or three bucketsful were taken away at that edge of the bank; and as there has been a perfect rush for staking out claims to-day, I have no doubt that it was found to pan out very rich."

The result of the first day's washing more than realized their anticipations, for when the cradle was cleared up over fifty ounces of gold were found at the bottom; and at the end of three days the old man paid Frank and his party their wages at four dollars a day each from the time they had commenced working at the shaft.

Another fortnight and they reached the bed rock. Each day the find had become heavier, but the climax was reached when they touched the rock. It was found that just where they reached the bottom, the rock which formed the bank bordering the flat came down almost perpendicularly to the level rock which had formed the old bed of the stream. This was worn perfectly smooth by the action of the water, and in the bed rock was a great caldron scooped out by an eddy of the stream. This was filled up with gravel, among which nuggets of gold were lying thickly; and when its contents were taken to the surface and separated, the

gold was found to weigh over three thousand ounces. The lower part of the ground was then dug out to the full size of the claim, and when all this was washed it was found that the total amount of gold obtained from the claim was over six thousand ounces.

As the work went on from day to day, Frank observed a gradual change coming over the elder of the two men. At first he had been excited, and at times irritable; but as each day showed increased returns, and it became a moral certainty that the claim was going to turn out extremely rich, the excitement seemed to pass away. He talked less, and spent less of his time in watching the work going on, sometimes not even coming down to watch the clear up at the end of the day's work. Even the discovery of the rich pocket in the rock scarcely seemed to stir him. His son, upon the contrary, made no secret of his satisfaction at the fortune which was falling to them. He shook off the reserve which had at first distinguished him; a weight of care seemed to fall from his shoulders, and his spirits became at times almost exuberant.

At first he had looked to Frank almost a middle-aged man, although his face and figure showed that he could not be many years his own senior; now he looked almost like a schoolboy, so full was he of life and spirits. The old man had taken much to Frank, and although during the latter part of the time he had talked but little, he liked him to come into the tent every evening to smoke a pipe and chat with his son. He had several times endeavored to draw from Frank his reason for leaving England and coming out to California at an age when many lads are still at school; but he had obtained no reply to his hints, for Frank did not care to enter upon the story of that incident at Westminster.

The evening when the claims had been worked out, and the last cradle washed out, the old man asked Frank to

bring Abe and his companions to the tent after they had had their supper. The tent showed little signs of the altered circumstances of its owners; a few more articles of cheap crockery and a couple of folding chairs were the only additions that had been made. Some boxes had been brought in now to serve as seats, and on one in the center were placed half a dozen bottles of champagne, which the young man proceeded to open.

"My friends," the elder said, "I am going away to-morrow, and I trust that your claims will turn out every bit as rich as ours has done."

"Even if they don't turn out as rich," Frank said, "there is no fear of their not turning out well. We consider we have made a capital bargain with you; we have been paid by you for our work in sinking the shaft, and now it will be easy for us to work our claims. It was a lucky day for us when we made that contract to sink your shaft."

"I am glad you think so, and very glad that you are likely to share my luck; still, I feel greatly indebted to you. It was a bargain, of course, but it was a bargain in which you were taking all the risk. There is, as you say, every probability of your claims turning out well; but there's no certainty in gold-mining, and at any rate we cannot go away with a fortune without feeling that, to some small extent at least, you will participate in it. Therefore I here hand you over each a bag with a hundred ounces of gold, so that, come what may, your time and labor here will not have been thrown away. You will not, I hope, pain me by refusing," he said, seeing that the men looked doubtfully at each other. "We owe it all to you, for when you threw in your lot with us we were desperate and starving."

"Wall, if you put it in that way, I don't see that we can say no, mate," Abe said, "though we are well content with

our lookout, I can tell you, and could get a biggish sum for our claims to-night if we were disposed to sell them. Still, what you says is true, though it isn't every one who makes a good thing out of a bargain as is ready to go beyond it. It was a fortunate day for you maybe that you fell in with my mate here, and it was a fortunate day for us when he fell in with you. When I goes back east and settles down on a farm I has got my eyes on, I shall always say as I owed my luck to my mate strolling over to talk to the two men as was working what seemed a hopeless claim in Cedar Camp.

"Wall, I suppose you are going back with your pile to the old country. I can only say as we wish you good luck thar, and plenty of enjoyment out of your money. Here's luck."

The miners all emptied their glasses, and then, shaking hands with father and son, filed out of the tent. Frank was about to follow them when he was stopped by a gesture from the old man. He had not liked accepting the present, but he did not wish to act differently from his comrades, and he saw that his refusal would really hurt the donor.

"Sit down a bit, lad," he said; "James is going to the camp to get a few things for our journey to-morrow, and I shall be alone, and now that it's all over I feel the reaction. It has been an exciting time the last month."

"It has indeed," Frank agreed, "and I have often thought to myself what a comfort it was that they had established a regular way of sending down gold twice a week with an escort; it would have been terrible if you had had to keep all that gold by you."

"Yes, I often thought so myself, and your offer to keep the gold in your tent on the days when the escort wasn't going was a great relief to me."

"It was safe enough with us," Frank said. "No one

would venture to try a tent with a pretty strong party; but with only your son and yourself there might have been a temptation to some broken-down gambler to carry it off. Besides, we have Turk as a guard, and I don't fancy any one would venture to try any tricks with our tent while he is inside it."

"Well, I hope it will be your turn now," the old man said, "and that before another two months are over you too will be setting out on your way home with what your friend called your pile."

"I shall not be doing that," Frank said; "whatever we find, I have no thought of going back to England."

"No? Well, lad, I don't want your confidence if you would rather not give it; but I will tell you my story, and perhaps when you have heard it you may be the more inclined to tell me yours. It is a painful story to tell, but that is part of my punishment; and you, lad, have a right to hear it, for I know that it is to you I owe my life, and that it is through you that I am to-morrow going home to do all that I can to retrieve my fault, and to wipe out the stain on my name. I was a solicitor, with a good practice, in a town of the west of England—it does not matter what its name was. I lost my wife, and then, like a fool, I took to drink. No one knew it except my son, for I never went out in the evening, but would sit at home drinking by myself till I could scarce stagger up to bed.

"He did all that he could to persuade me to give it up, but it had got too strong a hold upon me. At last we quarreled over it, and he left the house, and henceforth we only met at the office. He was engaged to be married to the daughter of our vicar. When the crash came—for in these cases a crash is sure to come sooner or later—the business had fallen off, and a bill was presented for payment which I had altogether forgotten I had signed. Then there was an investigation into my affairs. I could help

but little, for there were but few hours in the day now when my brain was clear enough to attend to any business whatever. Then it was found that ten thousand pounds which had been given me to invest by one of my clients had never been invested, and that it was gone with the rest.

"I had not intended to do anything dishonest, that even now I can affirm. I had intended to invest it, but in my muddled state put off doing so, and had gone on paying the interest as if it had been invested as ordered. When I knew that I had not enough in the bank to replace it, I went into foolish speculations to regain what I had lost; but until the crash came I had never fairly realized that I had not only ruined myself but was a swindler. I shall never forget the morning when James, who had been up all night going through my papers with my head-clerk, came down and told me what he had discovered. I was still stupid from what I had drunk overnight, but that sobered me. I need not tell you what passed between my son and me. I swore never to touch liquor again. He sold out of consols five thousand pounds which he had inherited from his mother, and handed it over to the man I had defrauded, giving him his personal bond that he would repay the rest of the money, should he live; and on those terms my client agreed to abstain from prosecuting me, and to maintain an absolute silence as to the affair.

"Then Jim broke off his engagement, and took passages for us in a sailing ship for Panama, and so on to San Francisco. I need not tell you the struggle it was to keep to my promise; but when Jim had given up everything for me, the least I could do was to fight hard for his sake. My thoughts were always fixed on California, my only hopes that I might live to see the rest of the debt repaid, and the boy's money replaced, so that he could buy a business and marry the woman he loved. I dreamed of it over

and over again, and, as I told you, three times I dreamed of the exact spot where we are now sitting.

"Somehow, in my dreams, I knew that if I dug straight down under the old tree that formed the center of the dreams I should find gold. This became a fixed idea with me, and when we reached the gold-fields I never stopped long in camp, so bent was I upon finding the tree of my dreams. Jim bore with me wonderfully. I knew he did not believe in my dream, but he was always ready to go where I wanted. I think now he thought that I was going out of my mind, or feared that if he thwarted me I might take to drink again. However, at last we found the tree—at least I was positive it was the tree of my dreams. James tried to dissuade me from digging in a place which looked so unpromising; but nothing would deter me save death, and you see the result. We shall go back; the debt will be cleared off, Jim will marry his sweetheart, and I shall live with him to the end of my days. He is a grand fellow is Jim, though I dare say it didn't strike you so when you first knew him."

"He is a grand fellow," Frank agreed heartily, "and I am truly glad, Mr. Adams, that all has turned out so well."

"And now, can you tell me something of yourself, Frank? It is to you we owe it that things have turned out well; and if, as I rather guess, you have got into some scrape at home, I can only say that my son and myself will be very glad to share our fortune with you, and to take one-third of it each."

"I thank you greatly, sir, for your generous offer, but it would be of no use to me. I have, as you suspect, got into a scrape at home, but it is from no fault of my own. I have been wrongfully suspected of committing a crime; and until that charge is in some way or other cleared up, and the slur on my name wiped off, I would not return to England if I had a hundred thousand pounds."

"And can nothing be done? Would it be any use whatever to set to work on any line you can suggest? I would make it my own business, and follow up any clew you could give me."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Adams; thank you with all my heart; but nothing can be done, there is nothing to follow. It was not a question of a crime so committed that many outside persons would be interested in it, or that it could be explained in a variety of ways. So far as the case went it was absolutely conclusive, so conclusive that I myself, knowing that I was innocent, could see no flaw in the evidence against myself nor for months afterward could I perceive any possible explanation save in my own guilt. Since then I have seen that there is an alternative. It is one so painful to contemplate that I do not allow myself to think of it, nor does it seem to me that even were I myself upon the spot, with all the detective force of England to aid me, I could succeed in proving that alternative to be the true one except by the confession of the person in question.

"If he were capable of planning and carrying out the scheme which brought about my disgrace, he certainly is not one who would under any conceivable circumstances confess what he has done. Therefore, there is nothing whatever to be done in the matter. Years and years hence, if I make a fortune out here, I may go home and say to those whose esteem and affection I have lost, 'I have no more evidence now than I had when I left England to support my simple declaration that I was innocent, but at least I have nothing to gain by lying now. I have made a fortune, and would not touch one penny of the inheritance which would once have been mine. I simply come before you again solemnly to declare that I was innocent, wholly and conclusively as appearances were against me.' It may be that the word of a prosperous man will be believed, though that of a disgraced schoolboy was more than doubted."

"And is there no one to whom I could carry the assurance of your innocence?" Mr. Adams asked. "Some one may still be believing in you in spite of appearances. It might gladden some one's heart were I to bear them from your lips this fresh assurance; were I to tell them how you have saved me when all hope seemed lost; were I to tell them how all here speak well of you, and how absolutely I am convinced that some hideous mistake must have been made."

Frank sat for some time silent.

"Yes," he said, at last. "I have a little cousin, a girl, she was like my sister; I hope—I think that, in spite of everything, she may still have believed me innocent. Will you see her and tell her you have seen me? Say no more until you see by her manner whether she believes me to be a rascal or not. If she does, give her no clew to the part of the world where you have come across me; simply say that I wished her to know that I was alive and well. If you see that she still, in spite of everything, believes that I am innocent, then tell her that I affirm on my honor and word that I am innocent, though I see no way whatever of ever proving it; that I do not wish her to tell my uncle she heard from me; that I do not wish her to say one word to him, for that, much as I value his affection, I would not for the world seem to be trying to regain the place he thinks I have forfeited, until I can appear before him as a rich man whom nothing could induce to touch one penny of his money, and who values only his good-will and esteem. That is her name and address."

And Frank wrote on the leaf of his pocket-book, "Alice Hardy, 354 Eaton Square."

"I do not think you will have to deliver the message; it is hardly possible that she should not, as my uncle has done, believe me to be guilty. Still, I do cling to the possibility of it. That is why I hesitate in giving you the

commission, for if it fails I shall lose my last pleasant thought of home. If you find she has believed in me, write to me at Sacramento, to the care of Woolfe & Company, of whom I always get my stores. There is no saying where I may be in four or five months' time, for it will take that before I can hear from you. It may be, in that case, she too will write. If she does not believe in me, do not write at all; I shall understand your silence; and, above all, unless you find she believes in me, say no more than that I am alive and well, and give no clew whatever to the part of the world where we have met."

"I will discharge your commission," Mr. Adams said. "But do not be impatient for an answer; I may not find a steamer going down to Panama for some time, and may have to go thence to New York, and thence take steamer to Europe. I may find on my arrival that the young lady is absent from home, perhaps traveling with her father, and there may be delays."

"My uncle is not her father," Frank said; "she is a ward of his. But I will not be impatient; not for six months will I give up such hope as I have."

"There is one more thing before I say good-night," Mr. Adams said. "I have been in great need, and know how hard it is to struggle when luck is against one, and I should like to give a small sum as a sort of thank-offering for the success which has attended me. In a mining camp there must be many whom a little might enable to tide on until luck turns. Will you be my almoner? Here is a bag with a hundred ounces of gold, the last we got to-day from our claim. Will you take it, and from time to time give help in the way of half a sack of flour and other provisions to men who may be down in the world from a run of ill-luck, and not from any fault of their own?"

"I will gladly do so," Frank replied; "such a fund as this would enable me to gladden the hearts of scores of

men. You can rely upon it, sir, that I will take care to see that it is laid out in accordance with your instructions."

After leaving the tent, Frank found James Adams sitting down on a log a short distance away.

"I would not disturb you," the latter said, "as I thought perhaps you were having a chat with my father—indeed he told me he should like to have a talk with you alone; but I want myself to tell you how conscious I am that I owe my happiness to you. Has my father told you how I am situated, and that I am going home to claim the dearest girl in the world, if, as I hope and believe, I shall find she has waited for me?"

"Your father has told me more," Frank said; "he has told me how nobly you devoted your life to his, and why, and I am truly glad that so much good has come of our meeting. More than that first little help I must disclaim, for it was Abe and not I who believed in your father's dreams, which I confess I had no shadow of belief in, though they have, so unaccountably to me, been verified."

"Nothing you can say, Frank, will minimize what you have done for us. You saved my father's life. If it had not been for you his dream would never have been carried into effect, and he would now be lying in the graveyard on the top of the hill, and I should be working hopelessly as a day laborer. I only want to say, that if at any time you want a friend, you can rely upon James Adams up to the last penny he has in the world."

The next morning Mr. Adams and his son started for San Francisco, and Frank and his party began to work their claims from the bottom of the shaft. Although they paid well, they proved far less rich than they had expected; they got good returns from the gravel, but found no pockets in the bed rock, which was perfectly smooth and even. They found that on either side of the Adams' claims the wall of rock behind swept round; this, no doubt,

had caused an eddy at this spot, which had worked out the hole in the bed rock, and caused the deposit of so large a quantity of gold here; and, singularly enough, Mr. Adams' dream had led him to take up the exact spot under which alone the gold had been so largely deposited. The party had taken on several hands, and six weeks sufficed to clear out the paying stuff in their claims, and it was found that, after paying all their expenses, there remained eight hundred ounces of gold; a handsome result, but still very far below what they had reason to expect from the richness of the stuff in the claims lying in the center of their ground.

This, however, added to the five hundred ounces they had received from Mr. Adams, gave them a total of about a thousand pounds each. They held a consultation on the night of the final clean-up. Two of the party were disposed to return east with their money, but they finally came round to Abe's view.

"A thousand pounds is a nice sum—I don't say it ain't—for less than six months' work; still, to my mind, now we are here, with the chance of doing just as well if we go on, I think it would be a fool's trick to give it up. Five thousand dollars will buy a good farm east, but one could work it with a good deal more comfort and sartainty if one had another five thousand lying in the bank ready to draw upon in case of bad times. We ain't fools; we don't mean to gamble or drink away what we have made, it will just lie in the bank at Sacramento until we want to draw it. If we work another year we may double it, but we can't make it less; we have got our horses still, and I vote we go back to our work as it was before, three of us digging and two carrying. We know that way we can pay our expenses, however bad our luck may be, so thar ain't nothing to lose in sticking to it for a bit longer, and thar may be a lot to gain."

This view prevailed, and in a short time the party

moved off to another place; for Cedar Camp was getting deserted, the other claims taken up on the flat had paid their way, but little more, and the men were off to new discoveries, of which they had heard glowing accounts.

For the next two months no marked success attended the labors of Frank and his comrades, they paid their expenses, and that was all. Frank enjoyed the life; he was in no hurry to get rich, and it gave him great pleasure to be able occasionally to give a helping hand to miners whose luck was bad, from the fund with which Mr. Adams had intrusted him. The work was hard, but he scarcely felt it, for his muscles were now like steel, and his frame had widened out until he was as broad and strong as any of his companions, and few would have recognized in him the lad who had shipped on board the Mississippi fifteen months before.

CHAPTER XIX.

STRIKING IT RICH.

TWICE the party of gold-diggers shifted their location, each time following a rush to some freshly discovered locality; but no stroke of good fortune attended them. At the end of each week a few ounces of gold remained to be added to the pile after the payment of expenses, but so far the earnings of the carriers far exceeded those of the diggers. One day, as Abe and Frank were just starting on their way down to Sacramento, they met three men coming along, each leading two laden horses. As the two teams met there was a shout of recognition.

"Heillo, Abe! I have been asking for you of every one since we got here six months ago, but no one seemed to know your party."

"We have been asking for you too," Abe said. "It seems curious that we should be here so long and never run agin each other; but there are such a lot of mining camps, and every one works too hard to spend much time thinking about his neighbors. I expected we should run across each other one of these days. And how goes it with you? How's every one?"

"We are broke up a bit," John Little said. "It wasn't to be expected as we should hang together long after we once got out here; one thought one place best, and another another; but I and my two mates here, and long Simpson, and Alick, and Jones, we have stuck together."

"And where are you now?" Abe inquired.

"Well, I will tell you, Abe, and I wouldn't tell any one else; but I said to you, 'If we ever makes a strike you are in it.' We have been prospecting up in the gulches of the North Yuba. We found as we couldn't get places worth working in the other camps, so we concluded it war best to find out a spot for ourselves; so we six have been a-grubbing and digging up among the mountains, and I tell you we have hit it hot. We three, washing with pans for four hours one morning, got out eight-and-twenty ounces of gold."

"That was something like," Abe said, in admiration.

"I reckon it war. Well, we covered the place up, and left our three mates to look arter it, telling them not to dig or make any sign until we came back. We sold the wagons and teams when we first got over, for they were no good to us in the mountains, and bought horses so as to keep ourselves supplied with provisions. We agreed before we began work we would come down to the town and get enough to last us, then we would move up quietly at night to our find, stake out our claims, and begin to work. Now if you and your four mates likes to join us, you are welcome."

"Well, that's a downright friendly offer, mate, and you bet we accept it. We had one capital stroke of luck, but since that worked out we haven't done much at digging, though Frank here and me has done very fair, trucking goods up from Sacramento. Where are your women?"

"Well," the other said, "we had some trouble about them. You see thar ain't many women up at the camps, they are rough places, and not fit for them. So we agreed that for the present it were best they should keep out of it. So we bought a little place with ten or twelve acres of ground, down at the foot of the hills, and there our wives and the kids are stopping. There's a big orchard, and they are raising vegetables, and when we goes down for

supplies we brings up a load or two of fruit and vegetables, and rare prices they fetch, I can tell you, more nor enough to keep them all down there. But we have agreed to bring two of them up now to cook, and wash and leave the others to look arter the place and the kids. Simpson and Jones ain't married, you know. Women have a right to claims as well as men, and of course we shall take up for those we bring up, as well as for two big lads; so that will give us ten claims, besides the extra claims for discovery. So with your five claims we can get hold of a tidy bit of ground. We are going to take these stores up now, and leave them in charge of our friends in the gulch, who will keep them hid in the woods, and then we can go back and bring up the women and a cargo of vegetables."

"Well, in four days we will meet you here. I will take all the horses and load them up. We were going to bring up flour for the storekeeper, but now we will get stores for ourselves. We will bring as much as we can get along with. We can sell what we don't want, for there is sure to be a rush in a short time. Frank shall go back and tell the storekeeper we ain't a-coming with the flour."

This was arranged, and four days later Abe and his party arrived at the spot agreed on, and an hour or two later the cavalcade, with the three men, two women, and two boys of fifteen or sixteen years old, came up, and the united party started together. It was some fifty miles to the spot where the gold had been discovered. Sometimes they wound along in deep valleys, passing several camps in full operation. At the last camp, which was a small one, a few questions were asked them as to their destination.

"We are just going a-prospecting for the mountain of gold," Abe replied, "and as we have got six months' stores aboard we mean to find it. We will send you down a few nuggets when we get up there."

"We shall have some of them after us in a day or two,"

John Little said; "every one suspects every one else; and they will make a pretty story of it, I guess, thinking as we shouldn't have brought the women up all this distance without having some place in our minds."

At last they arrived at their destination, the mouth of a little gorge running off the deep valley of the North Yuba. The gorge widened out into a narrow valley, and the party made its way among the pebbles and boulders at its bottom for a quarter of a mile, and then three men came out from among the trees and greeted them heartily.

"No one has been up here?" John Little asked.

"Two chaps came up and prospected about a bit, but they did not seem to hit on the right place; at any rate they went away again."

"All the better," John said. "Now let us stake out our claims at once, then we are all right, whoever comes."

The spot selected was at the head of the little valley; it ended here abruptly, and the stream came down forty feet precipitously into a hollow.

"This looks a likely spot, indeed," Abe said; "there must have been a thundering great waterfall here in the old days. I expect it wore a hole for itself in the rock, and if it is as rich as you say on the surface, there is no saying how rich it may be when we get down to the bed rock."

They had already settled that the two parties should work in partnership, and as, including the women and boys, they numbered fifteen, and could take up the five claims which, by mining law, the discoverer of a new place was entitled to, they had in all twenty claims, which gave them the whole of the little amphitheater at the foot of the fall for a distance of fifty yards down.

The men all set to work with their axes, and by nightfall much had been done. Frank's party had their tent, and the two small tents of the other party were allotted to

the married couples. A rough hut was got up for the rest of the men; this was to act as the kitchen and general room. A storehouse was erected of stout logs, with earth piled thickly over it to keep out the wet, and here their stores were securely housed. The tents and huts were on the slope, where the rocks widened out twenty yards below the bottom of their claim.

It was late in the second evening before the work was done. All were anxious to test the ground, but it was agreed not to touch it until they had housed themselves. At daybreak they were at work, and soon all were washing out pans of gravel at the stream; the results fully justified their expectations, there being a residuum of glittering grains at the bottom of each pan varying in weight from a pennyweight to a quarter of an ounce.

"Now," Abe said, "I should suggest that we makes a big cradle, fifteen feet long by three feet wide, and hang it on cross poles so as to be able to rock it easily; then we will dam up the stream at the top of the fall, and lead it down straight through a shoot into the cradle; of course the shoot will have a sluice so as to let in just as much water as we want, and that way two men will do the work of eight or ten washing."

Abe's plan was agreed to, and all the men set to work to construct the dam, cradle, and shoot.

It took two days' hard labor before all was in readiness, and then the work began in earnest. Two men swayed the cradle, four others shoveled the gravel and dirt into it, three continually stirred the contents and swept off the large stones and pebbles from the top, while the other two carried them away beyond the boundaries of their claims.

At the lower end of the cradle was a sheet of iron perforated with holes, large at the top, but getting smaller lower down, and altogether closed four inches from the bottom; through these holes the sand and gravel flowed

away. All day they worked vigorously and without intermission, and great was the excitement when, at the end of the day's work, they proceeded to clear up by emptying the cradle and examining the bottom. A shout of satisfaction arose as the particles of gold were seen lying thickly in the gravel at the bottom of the cradle. Very carefully this was washed out, and it was found that there were over fifty ounces of gold dust.

"I believe," Abe said, "that we have hit upon the richest spot in California. Ef it's like this on the surface, what is it going to be like when we get down to the bed rock?"

The next morning two diggers arrived on the scene; they saw at once by the methodical manner in which the place was being worked that the party must have found gold in paying quantities.

"Is it rich, mates?" they asked eagerly.

"Ay," Abe replied, "rich enough for anything. There are the boundaries of our claims, lads, and ye are welcome to set to work below them."

The miners threw off their coats, and at once set to work, and a shout of exultation greeted the result of the first bucket of stuff they washed out.

"Another week," Abe said, "and every foot of ground in the gulch from here down to the Yuba will be taken up. The news will spread like wildfire."

His anticipations were justified, and no one who came along a fortnight later would have recognized, in the scene of life and activity, the quiet wooded valley which Abe and his party had entered. The trees on the lower slopes were all felled; huts and tents stood along on the slopes from the head to the mouth of the valley, and several hundred men were hard at work.

For once every man was satisfied, and it was agreed that it was the richest place which had been discovered in California. But though all were doing well, their finds did

not approach those of the party at the head of the valley. The spot on which these were at work was indeed a natural trap for gold. At the lower end of the claim the bed rock was found at the depth of three feet only; but it sloped rapidly down to the foot of the fall, and here an iron rod had been driven down and showed it to be forty feet below the surface.

The bed rock had indeed, in the course of ages, been pounded away by the fall of water, and by the boulders and rocks brought down in time of flood, and in the deep hole the gold had lodged, a comparatively small proportion being carried away over the lower lip of the basin. When the bed rock was found at the lower end of the claim, they set to work to clear away and wash the whole surface to that depth, as far as the foot of the rocks on either side of the little amphitheater.

Frank and two of the men went down to Sacramento with horses to bring up pumps, for below the level of the lip of the hole it was, of course, full of water. The stream was carried in a shoot beyond this point, and when the pumps arrived they were soon set to work.

Every foot that they descended they found, as they expected, the gravel to be richer and richer; and many nuggets, some of them weighing upward of a pound, were found.

At the end of each week four of the miners, armed to the teeth, carried down the gold and deposited it at the bank of Sacramento. An escort was needed, for many attacks were made on gold convoys by parties of desperadoes; four men would indeed have been an insufficient guard, but at the same time other diggers in the valley sent down their find, and the escort was always made up to eight men from the general body.

Frank, from the first, generally formed one of the escort; he himself was perfectly ready to take his share in the

more laborious work of digging, but where Frank went Turk went, and Turk formed so valuable a member of the escort that the rest of the party begged his master always to go with the treasure. Every week had added to the weight and power of the animal, and he was now a most formidable-looking beast. He was extremely quiet and good-tempered at ordinary times, except that he would not allow any stranger to touch him; but when at all excited, his hair bristled from his neck to his tail, and his low, formidable growl gave a warning which few men would have been inclined to despise—indeed, of the many rough characters in the camp, there was not one who would not rather have faced a man with a revolver in his hand than have ventured upon a conflict with Turk.

The dog appeared to know that the escort duty was one which demanded especial vigilance. On the road a low growl always gave notice of the approach of strangers; and at night, when they stopped, and the heavy valises were carried from the pack animals into the wayside resting-places, Turk always lay down with his head upon them. He seemed so thoroughly to understand that this was in his special charge, that although at no other time would he leave Frank's side for a moment, he was, when thus on guard, content to lie quiet even should Frank take a stroll after reaching the hotel.

This guardianship greatly relieved the cares of the escort, as once placed under Turk's charge they felt no further anxiety about the treasure, for it would have been as much as any stranger's life was worth to have entered the room where Turk lay on guard. Once, indeed, the attempt was made. While the escort were taking their meals, a man went round to the window of the room, and, opening it, threw a large piece of poisoned meat to Turk. The dog placed one paw upon it, but remained, with his great head on the treasure, watching the man outside hold-

ing another piece in his hand, and speaking in soothing tones. The man, seeing that he did not move, began to climb in through the window. Suddenly, as if shot from a spring, Turk hurled himself from his recumbent position upon him.

The movement was so rapid and unexpected, that before the man could spring back from the window Turk had seized him by the shoulder. A shriek, followed by a heavy fall, brought the party rushing into the room. It was empty, but there was the sound of a scuffle outside; they ran to the window, but their interference was too late. Turk had shifted his hold, and, grasping the man by the throat, was shaking him as a terrier would a rat; and when, in obedience to Frank's voice, he loosened his hold, life was extinct. Not only was there a terrible wound in the throat of the robber, but his neck was broken by the shaking.

This was the only attempt which was ever made upon the treasure; for Turk gained such a reputation by the deed, that it was questionable whether, had he accompanied the pack-mules as their sole escort to Sacramento, the bravest stage-robbers in the district would have ventured to interfere with them.

After a time the lower valley became worked out, and numbers drifted away to other diggings; but it was four months before the party at the waterfall completely worked out their claims. The value of the ground in the last few feet, at the lower end of the hole, was immense; for in this, for ages, the gold from above had settled, and for the last fortnight the clear-up each day was worth a thousand pounds. When the last spadeful had been cleared up, and the last consignment sent down to the bank, they made up their total, and found that in four months they had taken from the hole upward of sixty thousand pounds.

It had been agreed before beginning that the two women

and the boys were each to have a half-share, and that the two women who had looked after the families below were to have the same. There were then in all six half-shares, and eleven shares, and each share was therefore worth over four thousand pounds. There were many instances in California in which parties of two or three men had made larger sums than this in the same time, but there were few in which a company had taken out so large a quantity from one hole.

At the meeting that night the partnership was dissolved, it being agreed that they should all go down to Sacramento together, and there each receive his share. One or two of the party said that they would go down to San Francisco for a spree, and then return and try their luck again. Four of the western farmers said that they should buy farms in the State and settle down there. Abe, and two other hunters, said they should return east.

"And what are you going to do, Frank?"

"I don't know," Frank said. "I don't want to return to Europe, and have no particular object in view. I think that I shall let my money remain in the bank for a bit, at any rate, and go in for freighting on a large scale. I shall buy a couple of dozen mules, and hire some Mexicans to drive them. I like the life among these mountains, and there is a good thing to be made out of carrying. But I have had enough of digging; it's tremendously hard work, and I couldn't expect to meet with such a slice of luck as this again if I worked for fifty years."

"Well, Frank, I shall not try to dissuade you, "Abe said. "If I was going on hunting, I should say 'Come along with me to the plains'; but me and my mate is going east, as each of us has got some one waiting for us thar, and I expect we shall marry and settle down. I will write to you at Sacramento when I get fixed, and I needn't tell you how glad the sight of your face will make me if you are ever traveling my way."

A few days afterward the party separated at Sacramento, Frank only remaining two days in that town. The wild scenes of dissipation and recklessness disgusted him; he looked with loathing upon the saloons where gambling went on from morning till night, broken only by an occasional fierce quarrel, followed in most cases by the sharp crack of a revolver, or by desperate encounters with bowie knives. Bad as things were, however, they were improving somewhat, for a vigilance committee had just been started, comprising all the prominent citizens of the town. Parties of armed men had seized upon some of the most notorious desperadoes of the place, and had hung them on the lamp-posts, while others had been warned that a like fate awaited them if they were found three hours later within the limits of the town.

Similar scenes took place in San Francisco, for the force of the law was wholly insufficient to restrain the reckless and desperate men who congregated in the towns, and who thought no more of taking life than eating a meal. To put a stop to the frightful state of things prevailing, the more peaceful of the San Francisco citizens had also been obliged to organize a vigilance committee to carry out what was called Lynch law, a rough and ready method of justice subject to grave abuses under other circumstances, but admirably suited to such a condition of things as at that time prevailed in California.

For some time Frank worked between Sacramento and the diggings. He enjoyed the life, riding in the pure mountain air, under the shade of the forests, at the head of the team. Sometimes he wondered vaguely how long this was to last; if he was always to remain a rover, or whether he would ever return to England. Sometimes he resolved that he would go home and make an effort to clear himself of this stain which rested upon his name; but he could see no method whatever of doing so, as he had

nothing but his own unsupported assertion of his innocence to adduce against the circumstantial evidence against him, and there was no reason why his word should be taken now more than it was before.

In many of the camps life had now become more civilized. In cases where the bed of gold-bearing gravel was large, and where, consequently, work would be continued for a long time, wooden towns had sprung up, with hotels, stores, drinking and gambling saloons. Work was here carried on methodically; water was, in some cases, brought many miles in little canals from mountain lakes down to the diggings, and operations were carried on on a large scale. Companies were being formed for buying up and working numbers of claims together.

The valleys were honeycombed with shafts driven down, sometimes through a hundred feet of gravel, to the bed rock, as it was found much more profitable working this way than in surface-washing. Stage-coaches and teams of wagons were running regularly now along well-made roads. Frank's earnings were therefore smaller than they had been at first, but they still paid his expenses, and added a few pounds each trip to his account at the bank.

He took shares in many of the companies formed for bringing down water from the lakes, and these were soon found to be an exceedingly valuable property, paying in many cases a return each month equal to the capital.

The life of a teamster was not without danger; bears in considerable numbers were found among the mountains, and these, when pressed by hunger, did not hesitate to attack passing teams. In times of rain the rivers rose rapidly, and the valleys were full of fierce torrents, sometimes preventing horses from crossing for many hours, and being still more dangerous if the rise commenced when the track to be followed wound along in the foot of the valley. Several times Frank narrowly escaped with his life when

thus surprised; but in each case he managed to reach some spot where his horses could climb the side before the water took them off their feet.

The greatest danger, however, of the roads, arose from the lawless men that frequented them. Coaches were frequently stopped and plundered, and even the gold escorts were attacked with success. Strong parties of the miners sometimes went out in pursuit of the highwaymen, but it was very seldom that success attended them, for the great forests extended so vast a distance over the hills that anything like a thorough search was impossible.

Frank, however, treated this danger lightly; he never carried money with him save what he received on arrival at camp for the carriage of his goods, while the flour, bacon and other stores which he carried up offered no temptation to the robbers.

One evening, however, having been detained some hours before he could cross a river swollen by a thunderstorm, he was traveling along the road much later than usual; the moon was shining brightly, and as the long team of mules descended a hill he meditated camping for the night at its foot.

Suddenly he heard a pistol-shot ahead, followed by five or six others. Ordering his men to follow slowly, he put spurs to his horse, and, drawing his revolver, galloped on. The firing had ceased just as he caught sight of a coach standing at the bottom of a hill; three bodies were lying in the road, and the passengers were in the act of alighting under the pistols of four mounted men who stood beside them. Frank rode up at full speed, Turk bounding beside him.

The highwaymen turned, and two pistol-shots were fired at the newcomer. The balls whistled close to him, but Frank did not answer the fire until he arrived within three paces of the nearest highwayman, whom he shot dead; the

other three fired, and Frank felt a sensation as of a hot iron crossing his cheek, while his left arm dropped useless by his side. Another of the highwaymen fell under his next shot; at the same instant Turk, with a tremendous bound, leaped at the throat of one of the others who was in the act of leveling his pistol. The impetus was so tremendous that man and horse rolled in the road, the pistol exploding harmlessly in the air. The struggle on the ground lasted but a few seconds, and then Turk, having disposed of his adversary, turned to look after a fresh foe; but the field was clear, for the remaining robber had, on seeing Turk, turned his horse with a cry of alarm, and ridden away at full speed. The passengers crowded round Frank, thanking him for their rescue.

"I am glad to have been of use," Frank said, "and to have arrived just in time; and now will one of you help me off my horse, for my left arm is broken, I think."

The driver of the coach had been shot through the heart by the first shot fired by the robbers. There were two armed guards, one of whom had been killed, and the other wounded, while two of the passengers who had left the coach to take part in the defense had also been killed; the wounded guard was helped down from the coach.

"You have done a good night's work," he said to Frank; "there are nigh ten thousand ounces of gold in the coach. No doubt those fellows got wind of the intention of the bank people at Yuba to send it down to Sacramento; it was kept very dark too, and I don't believe that one of the passengers knew of it. They would have sent more than two of us to guard it if they had thought that it had been let out; there must have been some one in the secret who gave notice beforehand to these chaps.

"Now, gentlemen, if one of you will take the ribbons we will be moving on. I will get up beside him, and I will trouble any of you who have got Colts to take your places

PROPERTY

up behind; there ain't no chance of another attack to-night, still, we may as well look out. Now, sir, if you will take your place inside we will take you on until we get to some place where your arm can be looked to. You will hear from the directors of the bank as to this night's work."

Frank's team had now arrived on the spot, and he directed the men to complete their journey and deliver their stores, and then to go down to the stables where they put up at Sacramento and there to wait his arrival.

Frank was left behind at the next town, his fellow-passengers overwhelming him with thanks, many having considerable amounts of gold concealed about them, the result, in some cases, of months' work at the diggings.

One of them proposed that each man should contribute one-fourth of the gold he carried to reward their rescuer, a proposition which was at once accepted. Frank, however, assured them that although leading a team of mules he was well off, and in no need whatever of their kind offer.

Seeing that he was in earnest, his fellow-passengers again thanked him cordially, and took their places in the coach. They were not to be balked in their gratitude, and three days later a very handsome horse, with saddle and holsters with a brace of Colt's revolvers, arrived up from Sacramento for Frank, with the best wishes of the passengers in the coach. On the same day a letter arrived saying that at a meeting of the directors of the bank it had been resolved that, as he had saved them from a loss of fifty thousand pounds by his gallantry, a sum of two thousand pounds should be placed to his credit at the bank in token of their appreciation of the great service he had rendered them.

CHAPTER XX.

A MESSAGE FROM ABROAD.

"I LIKE this, grandfather. I think I like it better than anything I have seen. In the sunlight the cathedral is too dazzling and white, and the eye does not seem to find any rest; but in the moonlight it is perfectly lovely. And then the music of that Austrian band is just right from here; it is not too loud, and yet we can hear every note. Somehow, I always like better not to see the players, but just to have the benefit of the music as we do now, and to sit taking it in, and looking at that glorious cathedral, all silver and black, in the moonlight. It is glorious!" Harry murmured, "I could not have believed there was anything so lovely."

"Yes, yes," Captain Bayley said absently, "the ices are good."

"I am not talking of the ices, grandfather, though no doubt they are good. I am talking about the cathedral."

"Are you, my boy?" Captain Bayley said, rousing himself. "Yes, there are cathedrals which beat Milan when seen in broad daylight, but in the moonlight there is no building in the world to compare with it, unless it be the Taj Mahal at Agra. Of course they differ wholly and entirely in style, and no comparison can be made between them; the only resemblance is that both are built of white marble; but of the two, I own that I prefer the Taj."

"I am afraid I shall never see that," Alice Hardy said, "but I am quite content with Milan; I could stop here for a month."

"A month, my dear!" Captain Bayley exclaimed, in consternation, "three days will be ample. You know we agreed to stop here till Friday, and then to go on to Como."

"Well, perhaps we will let you go on Friday, but we shall have to dawdle about the lakes for some time. We can't rush through them as we have been rushing through all these grand old Italian towns. We must have a long rest there, you know."

"Yes, I suppose so," the old officer said reluctantly; "but I like to be on the move."

Captain Bayley had, indeed, somewhat tried his two young companions by his eagerness to be ever on the move. They had now been nearly two years absent from England; they had visited all the principal towns of Germany and Austria, had gone down the Danube and stopped at Constantinople, had spent a fortnight in the Holy Land, and had then gone to Egypt and ascended the Nile as far as the First Cataract, then they had taken steamer to Naples, and thence made their way up through Italy to Milan, and now were about to cross over into Switzerland, and were, after spending a month there, to go on to Paris, and thence home.

The highest surgical advice, and the most skillful appliances, aided by the benefit he had derived from the German baths, had done much for Harry, and he had for months passed many hours a day in the hands of a skillful shampooer, who traveled with him as valet. He had, to a great extent, recovered the use of his legs, and now walked with the assistance of two sticks, and there was every hope that in time he would be able to dispense with these aids, although he would always walk somewhat stiffly. Captain Bayley was delighted at this improvement in his grandson, and would have been perfectly happy had it not been for the continual worry caused him by the failure of his advertisements to elicit any news whatever of Frank.

It was this uncertainty that caused his restlessness, and he was forever pressing forward to the next town to which he had directed letters to be sent, constantly suffering disappointments when he found the usual announcement from his solicitor that no news had been obtained of his missing nephew.

Alice and Harry shared his anxiety; but their pleasure in the new scenes they were visiting prevented their being so entirely engrossed in the subject as he was; and although scarcely a day passed without some talk as to Frank's whereabouts, and the probability of his discovery, they were able to put the subject aside and to enter with full zest into the scenes they were visiting. But in Captain Bayley's mind the question was always uppermost; sincerely attached as he had always been to Frank, the thought that his favorite might have suffered a cruel and dastardly wrong, and might now be slaving for his living in some unknown part of the world, worried and troubled him incessantly, and he felt that, happy as he was at the discovery of his grandson, he could never be contented and tranquil until this matter was cleared up. Besides, in his will Fred Barkley was still standing as heir to one-third of his fortune, and the thought that he might die before the mystery was cleared up, and that possibly this property might go to the man he suspected of so foul a crime, was absolutely intolerable to the old officer. He had, indeed, been engaged in a correspondence with his lawyer, Mr. Griffith, in reference to his will, which he wanted worded so that Fred Barkley should not take the fortune left him until the question of the theft of the ten pounds should be cleared up. Mr. Griffith pointed out that it was scarcely possible to frame a will in such a way.

"Had your nephew been publicly accused of the crime, doubtless a clause might be framed by which the money would remain in the hands of trustees until he had cleared

himself to their satisfaction; but in this case there is no shadow of suspicion against him. Another person has, in the eyes of those who know the circumstances of the affair, been adjudged guilty. No one has breathed a word against the honor of your nephew; and therefore to say that he shall not touch the legacy until his honor is cleared would be to take a most extraordinary, and, I think, unprecedented course. In fact I don't see how it could be done."

Captain Bayley had replied hotly that it must be done, and, owing to his frequent changes of address, and the time occupied in the letters passing to and fro, the correspondence had already lasted for some months. What enraged Captain Bayley most of all was that Mr. Griffith would not admit that any doubt whatever existed as to Frank Norris' guilt, nor that there was a shadow of reasonable suspicion against his cousin; and each time the evidence was marshaled up, Captain Bayley had to acknowledge to himself that the lawyer's arguments were unanswerable, and that the only grounds that he himself had for his doubts were his affection for Frank, and the fixed, passionate belief of Alice Hardy in his innocence. That day Captain Bayley was exceptionally out of temper and irascible, for he had that morning received a letter from Mr. Griffith positively declining to draw up a clause for insertion in the will of the nature he desired, and saying that if Captain Bayley insisted upon its insertion, much as he should regret it after so long a connection had existed between them, he should prefer that his client should place himself in other hands.

"I trust," he said, "that this will cause no interruption in the personal friendship which has for years existed between us, but I would risk even that rather than draft a clause which I consider would be in the highest degree unjust, and which, I tell you fairly, would, I believe, be upset in any court of law. Nothing would, in my opinion, be more

unfair, I may say more monstrous, than that a hand should be stretched from the grave to strike a blow at the honor of a young man of stainless reputation."

Captain Bayley at all times disliked opposition; he disliked it especially when, as in the present instance, he felt that he was in the wrong.

When they returned to their hotel the waiter informed Alice that a gentleman had called twice, while they were out, to see her. He had not left a card, saying that Miss Hardy would not know his name, but that he had a message to give her, and that he would not occupy her time more than a few minutes if she would be good enough to see him.

"It sounds quite mysterious," Alice said, smiling to her uncle.

"Was it a young gentleman or an old?" she asked the waiter in French.

"An elderly gentleman, signora."

"Some elderly millionaire, Alice," Captain Bayley growled sarcastically, as they ascended the stairs, "who has seen you in the streets, and wishes to lay himself and his fortune at your feet."

"That must be it," Alice laughed. "But perhaps he has brought me a message from some of the many ladies we have met in our travels. I suppose I had better see him if he comes again."

"I suppose so," Captain Bayley said. "He is not likely to eat you, and as my room opens off the sitting-room, you have only to scream and I can come in to your rescue."

"Very well, I will scream, uncle, if necessary. But do you think he wants to see me alone?"

"As he has only asked for you, and no one else, I suppose he does. At any rate I have no lively curiosity as to his visit, and I don't suppose Harry has either. Most likely it's some man who wants to sell you jewelry or cam-

eos, or to ask you for a subscription for the chaplain, or to beg of you on some pretext or other; they are always at it. He saw your name on the hotel list standing without any male protector of the same name. No doubt he thinks you are an elderly spinster with money."

"I expect it's something of that sort, Alice," Harry laughed.

But Alice insisted that she was convinced that the mysterious stranger had something important to communicate to her. As she was taking her things off there was a knock at the door, and the waiter said:

"The gentleman who before called is below."

"Show him up into our sitting-room," she said, and at once went in to receive him. "He's just coming up, uncle," she said, tapping at Captain Bayley's door. He opened it a few inches.

"I have got my pistol handy, Alice, in case you scream."

Alice laughed, and as she turned round there was a knock at the door. The waiter announced Monsieur Adams, and an elderly gentleman entered.

"You must be surprised at the intrusion of a stranger at this hour of the evening, Miss Hardy; but my excuse must be that I have for nearly two months been following your footsteps, and I was afraid that if I put off calling upon you until the morning I might find that you had gone."

"Following me for two months!" Alice repeated in great surprise. "I do not understand, sir."

"Naturally, Miss Hardy, the statement appears a strange one to you; but the fact is I made a promise to deliver a message to you. I found upon reaching England that you had left; I obtained your address at Cairo, and went there only to find you had left a fortnight before my arrival; then I followed you to Naples, and was a week too late. At Rome I missed you by a day, and as I could not learn

there, at your hotel, where you were going next, beyond the fact that you had gone North, I have been hunting for you ever since."

"But, sir," Alice said, more and more surprised, "what message could possibly be of sufficient importance for you to undertake so long a journey to deliver it?"

"I did not know how long you might be before you returned to England, Miss Hardy, and as I knew how anxiously the answer to my message would be expected, I preferred to follow you, in order that there might be no more delay than necessary."

Suddenly a thought flashed across Alice Hardy's brain. She advanced a step nearer to her visitor, and exclaimed:

"Do you come from my cousin Frank?"

"You have guessed rightly. I met him abroad; I am not at liberty at present to say where. He rendered me one of the greatest services one man can render to another —he saved my life, and did much more; but upon that it is not now necessary to enter."

"But the message, sir," Alice interrupted, "you cannot know how we have been longing for a word from him all this time."

"I do not know yet, Miss Hardy, whether I have any message to deliver; it depends upon what you say in answer to what I tell you. I think I can give you his very words as we sat together the night before I left for England; 'I have a little cousin, a girl, she was like my sister; I think, I hope, that in spite of everything she may still have believed me innocent. Will you see her, and tell her you have seen me? Say no more until you see by her manner whether she believes me to be a rascal or not.'"

"No, no," Alice broke in, with a cry, "not for one moment; surely Frank never doubted me. Never for a single instant did I believe one word against him."

"Is anything the matter, my dear?" Captain Bayley

asked, opening his door, for the sound of her raised voice had reached him.

"No, uncle," she cried, hurrying to him, "it is a message from Frank. Go away a minute, or— No," and she turned again to Mr. Adams, "surely my uncle can hear too, he is as interested as I am."

"My message was to you alone, Miss Hardy," Mr. Adams said gravely; "I must deliver it as it was delivered to me. It will be for you to decide whether, after hearing it, you think it right to observe the injunction it contains for your absolute silence."

"At least tell me, sir," Captain Bayley exclaimed, as much agitated as Alice, "whether he is alive and well."

"He is alive and well, sir—at least he was when I saw him last, now nearly four months ago."

"Thank God for that, at least," Captain Bayley said fervently. "Do not be long, Alice; you know what I shall be feeling." He went back into his room again, and closed the door, and Mr. Adams continued:

"'If she thinks me a rascal, give her no clew to the part of the world where you have come across me, simply say that I wished her to know that I am alive and well.' There, Miss Hardy, my message would have ended had you not declared your faith in his innocence; I can now go on: 'If you see that she still, in spite of everything, believes that I am innocent, then tell her that I affirm on my honor and word that I am so'—Alice gave a cry of joy —'though I see no way of proving it. Tell her that I do not wish her to tell my uncle that she has heard of me; that I do not wish her to say one word to him, for, much as I value his affection, I would not for the world seem to be trying to gain the place he thinks I have forfeited, until I can appear before him as a rich man whom nothing could induce to touch one penny of his money, and who values only his good-will and esteem.'

"That is all the message, Miss Hardy. But now that I see you have never believed him guilty, I am at liberty to tell you that we met in California, and to give you an address to which you can write at Sacramento, and I can tell you the story of our acquaintance; but as the story is a long one, and it is now late, I will, with your permission, call in the morning again."

Tears were streaming down the girl's face as she lifted her head.

"Thank you, sir! oh, thank you so much! You cannot tell how happy your message has made me—how happy it will make us all, for I am sure that Frank will not blame me for breaking his injunction. He cannot tell the circumstances; he does not know that my uncle has fretted as much as myself. He evidently thinks that he believes him guilty, though why he should do so I don't know, for at first he was just as much convinced as I was of Frank's innocence, and it was only Frank's silence and his going away without saying one word in defense of himself that made him doubt him. Would you mind sitting here for a minute or two while I go in to him? We want to hear so much, if you are not in a hurry."

"I am in no hurry," Mr. Adams said, smiling. "After traveling for two months to deliver a message, one would not mind sitting up for a few hours to deliver it thoroughly; and let me tell you that if my message has made you happy, your reception of it has given me almost equal satisfaction. I should have been grieved beyond expression to have had to write to him that you doubted him, for my dear friend said, 'If your commission fails, I shall lose my last pleasant thought of home.'"

"Poor Frank!" Alice murmured, as she turned to go to her uncle's room, "how could he have ever doubted us?"

"Uncle," she said, as she entered, "I feel quite justified in telling you Frank's message to me. Why it was sent

to me instead of to you I do not know, except that it seems as if he thought that I might believe him innocent, while somehow he had an idea that you thought he was guilty."

"Does he say he is innocent, Alice?" Captain Bayley broke in.

"He does, uncle; he declares on his honor and word that he is innocent."

"Thank God!" the old officer said, dropping into a chair and covering his face with his hands. For a minute he sat silent, but Alice could see how deeply he was affected.

"Don't say any more, my dear," he said, in a low, shaken voice. "I have heard quite enough; it was only Frank's assurance that I have been wanting all this time. I am content now. Thank God that this burden is lifted off one's mind. Go in and tell Harry; I should like to be alone for a few minutes."

"Yes, uncle; and Frank's friend is in the next room, and will tell us all about him when you are ready to hear it."

Harry was greatly delighted at the news, and after a few minutes Alice returned with him to the sitting-room. She knocked at her uncle's door, and called out, "We are here, uncle, when you are ready to come in." In another minute Captain Bayley entered. He went up to Mr. Adams.

"You have brought me the best news I have ever heard, sir; you cannot tell what a weight you have lifted from my shoulders, and how I feel indebted to you."

"Yes, uncle, and do you know that Mr. Adams has been traveling nearly two months to deliver the message, knowing how anxious Frank will be to hear how it was received. He went to Egypt after us, and finding we had left has been following us ever since."

"God bless you, sir!" Captain Bayley said, seizing Mr. Adams' hand and shaking it violently, "you are a friend indeed. Now in the first place, please tell me the message

you have given my niece, for so far I have only heard that Frank declared that he is innocent; that was quite enough for me at first. I want to know why I was to be kept in the dark."

"The message will explain that," Mr. Adams replied, and he again repeated the message he had given Alice.

"Yes, that explains it," Captain Bayley said, when he had finished; "that's just like the boy of old. I like him for that. But why on earth did he not say he was innocent at first?"

"That I cannot tell you; I know no more of the past than the message I have given you, except he said that he had been wrongfully suspected of committing a crime, and that, although he was innocent, the case appeared absolutely conclusive against him, and that he saw no chance whatever of his being cleared, save by the confession of the person who had committed the offense."

"But why on earth didn't he say he was innocent?" Captain Bayley repeated, with something of his old irritation. "What possessed him to run away as if he were guilty without making one protest to us that he was innocent?"

"I cannot tell you, sir. As I said, I know nothing whatever of the circumstance; I do not even know the nature of the accusation against him. I only know, from my knowledge of his character, that he is a noble and generous young man, and that he never could have been guilty of any dishonorable action."

"Nobody would ever have thought he would," Captain Bayley said sharply, "unless he had as much as said so himself by running away when this ridiculous accusation was brought forward. I should as soon have doubted my own existence as supposed he had stolen a ten-pound note had he not run away instead of facing it like a man: Until he bolted without sending me a word of denial or expla-

nation, I would have knocked any man down who had said he believed him guilty. The evidence had no more weight in my mind than the whistling of the wind; my doubts are of his own creation. Thank God they are at an end now that he has declared he is innocent. He has behaved like a fool, but there are so many fools about that there is nothing out of the way in that. Still it was one of the follies I should not have expected of Frank. That he should get into a foolish scrape from thoughtlessness, or high spirits, or devilry, or that sort of thing, I could imagine; but I am astonished that he should have committed an act of folly due to cowardice."

"I won't hear you, uncle, any more," Alice exclaimed; "I know that you don't mean anything you say, and that you are one of the happiest men in the world this evening; but of course Mr. Adams does not know you as we do, and does not understand that all this means that you are so relieved from the anxiety that you have felt for the last two years that you are obliged to give vent to your feelings somehow. Please, Mr. Adams, don't regard what my uncle says in the slightest, but tell us all about Frank. As to his going away, we know nothing about his motives, or why he went, or anything else, and I am quite sure he will be able to explain it when we see him; as to running away from cowardice, uncle knows as well as we do that the idea is simply ridiculous. So please go on, and if uncle interrupts we will go down to another sitting-room and he shall hear nothing about it."

Mr. Adams then told the story of his acquaintance with Frank; how, when all seemed dark, when he was lying prostrate with fever brought on by overexertion and insufficient food, Frank had come to his son and had insisted on helping him; how he had helped to nurse him, and how, finally, Frank and his companions had worked the claim and realized a fortune for him. He told how popu-

lar Frank was among his companions, how ready he was to do a kindly action to any one needing it, and finally repeated the conversation they had had together the last evening, and Frank's determination not to return to England until he had gained such a fortune that he could not be suspected of desiring to gain anything but his uncle's esteem when he presented himself before him and declared he was innocent.

"The young scamp," Captain Bayley growled, "thinking all the time of his own feelings and not of mine. It's nothing to him that I may be fretting myself into my grave in the belief of his guilt; nothing that I may be dead years and years before he comes home with this precious fortune he relies on making. Oh, no! we are all to wait another twenty years in order that this jackanapes may not be suspected of being mercenary; three dozen at the triangles would do him a world of good, and if he were here I would——"

"You wouldn't do anything but shake his hand, and shout 'Frank, my boy, I am glad to see you back again,' so it's no use pretending that you would," Alice interrupted. "And now, Mr. Adams, it's past twelve, and I feel ashamed that we should have kept you so long; but I know you don't mind, and you have made us all very happy. You will come again in the morning, will you not? There is so much to ask about, and we have not yet even begun to tell you how deeply we are all obliged to you for your goodness in hurrying away from England directly you got home, and in spending weeks and weeks wandering about after us."

"I shall be glad to call again in the morning, Miss Hardy, but I shall start for England in the evening; I am anxious to be back now that my mission is fulfilled. My son is to be married in ten days' time, and he would like me to be present, although he said in his last letter that

he quite agreed that the first thing of all was to find you and deliver the message, whether I got home or not. As I have several matters to arrange before his marriage, presents to get, or one thing or other, I shall go straight through."

"That is right," Captain Bayley said, "we will travel together, my dear sir; for of course we shall go straight back to England now. We have been dawdling about in this wretched country long enough. Besides, everything has to be arranged, and we have got to get at the bottom of this matter; so if you have no objection, we will travel home together. If the young people here want to dawdle about any longer they can do so; I dare say they can look after themselves, or if not, I can make an arrangement with some old lady or other to act as Alice's chaperon."

"You silly old man," Alice said, kissing him, "as if we were not just as anxious to get home and to get to the bottom of the thing as you are."

So the next afternoon the party started in the diligence which was to take them over the St. Gothard to Lucerne.

Alice had by this time heard, somewhat to the confusion of her ideas, that Frank was no longer the lad she had always depicted him, but a tall, powerful young man, rough and tanned by exposure, and a fair match in strength for the wildest character in the mining camp.

By the time they reached London Mr. Adams and Captain Bayley had become fast friends, and the first thing the next morning Captain Bayley drove with Alice to Bond street and purchased the handsomest gold watch and chain he could find as a wedding-present for young Adams, and a bracelet as handsome for Alice to send to the bride; then he sent Alice home in the carriage and proceeded to his laywer's. He returned home in the worst of tempers. Mr. Griffith had refused to admit that the receipt of Frank's message had in any way changed the position.

"I understood all along, Captain Bayley, that your nephew, when accused by his master, had denied the theft; the mere fact that he now, three years later, repeats the denial to you, does not, so far as I can see, alter the situation in the slightest. He says that he's not in a position to disprove any of the circumstances alleged against him. Of course you are at liberty to believe him now, just as you believed him at first, and as, on mature consideration, you disbelieved him afterward; but that is a matter quite of individual opinion. You have announced to Mr. Barkley that you intend to leave him a third of your fortune, and it would be in the highest degree unjust to make any alteration now, without a shadow of reason for doing so. Personally, no doubt, it is a satisfaction to you to have recovered your belief in Frank's innocence, but that ought not to interfere in any way with the arrangements that you have made. My own belief is, as I have told you, that, pressed for money, and afraid of expulsion were his escapade of going out at night discovered, Frank yielded to a momentary temptation—a grievous fault, but not an irreparable one—one, at any rate, for which he has been severely punished, and for which he may well be forgiven. So far I am thoroughly with you, but I cannot and will not follow you in what I consider your absolutely unfounded idea that he is innocent, and that his cousin—against whom there is not a vestige of evidence, while the proof the other way is overwhelming—is the real offender."

Whereupon Captain Bayley had returned home in a state of fury.

"But, after all, uncle," Alice said, after listening for some time to his outburst against lawyers in general, and Mr. Griffith in particular, "it really is reasonable what Mr. Griffith says. You and I and Harry, who know Frank so well, are quite sure that he is innocent; but other people who don't know him in the same way might naturally take

the other view, for, as Mr. Griffith says, the proofs were strong against him, and there was nothing whatever to connect Fred Barkley with the crime. I have been talking it over with Harry since I came back, and he agrees with me that we must, as you say, get to the bottom of the whole affair before we go any further."

"Well, isn't that what we have been trying to do all along?" Captain Bayley exclaimed angrily. "How are we to get to the bottom of it? If you will tell me that I will grant that you have more sense in your head than I have ever given you credit for."

"My idea, grandfather, is this," Harry said. "We have not yet heard Frank's side of the story. I am convinced that if we heard that we should get some new light upon it; and my proposal is that you and I shall at once start for California and see Frank, and hear all about it. It seems to me that he has been silent because he has some mistaken idea that you believe in his guilt, and when you assure him that you have an absolute faith in his innocence he will go into the whole matter, and in that case we shall probably find some clew which we can follow up and get at the truth."

"The very thing, Harry," the captain exclaimed impetuously, "we will start by the first ship, you and I, and find this troublesome young rascal, and have it out with him."

"And I shall go too, of course, uncle," Alice Hardy exclaimed; "I am not going to be left behind by myself."

"Impossible, Alice! you don't know what the country is. You could not go wandering about up in the mountains, looking for him through all sorts of mining camps, with no decent place for a woman to sleep."

"No, uncle; but I could stay at San Francisco till you came back with him; there must be some sort of people there you could leave me with. I am sure you would not be so unkind as to leave me in England in a state of anxi-

ety all these months. You know I enjoy the sea, and you will want somebody to look after you during the voyage, and to see that you don't get into scrapes with that dreadful temper of yours. Besides, you must have some one to scold; you could not get on without it, and you don't scold Harry half so vigorously as you do me."

And so at last it was settled, and a week later Captain Bayley, his grandson, and Alice Hardy, sailed for Panama.

CHAPTER XXI.

HAPPY MEETINGS.

FRANK was in splendid health, and his bones set rapidly. A fortnight after the encounter with the brigands he rode down to the camp on the Yuba with his arm in a sling. His attack single-handed upon the four stage-robbers had rendered him quite a noted character, and he was warmly greeted upon his arrival. As soon as he had got to the wooden shanty dignified by the name of the "hotel," a deputation waited upon him.

"We have come," the leader of the party said, "to congratulate you in the name of the hull of this mining camp on having pretty well cleared out that gang of stage-robbers. The safety of the roads air a matter of great importance to this camp, as well as to all the other camps in the state, seeing that we air obliged to pay a heavy rate of insurance on our gold being carried down, and have the risk of losing it all if we takes it down ourselves; therefore it air the opinion of this community that you have done them a considerable sarvice, and we are obliged to you."

The four members of the deputation then shook Frank solemnly by the hand.

"I can only say I am much obliged to you," Frank said, "and I only regret that one of the four got off safe. However, they had a lesson, and I hope the roads will be safer in future."

"Now," the spokesman of the deputation said, "let's liquor."

Five glasses were poured out by the bartender, and

drunk off solemnly; this was considered to bring the ceremony to a close.

In the evening Frank was sitting around a fire with some of his acquaintances, when two persons were seen approaching.

"Can you tell me," one of them said, when he got up to the group, "whether Frank Norris is in the camp, and if so, where I can find him?"

Frank sprang to his feet with a cry of astonishment.

"Uncle," he exclaimed, "is it you, or am I dreaming?"

"My dear boy," Captain Bayley exclaimed, as he grasped Frank's hand, "thank God we have found you! We have been advertising and looking for you ever since you left, nearly three years ago."

For a minute or two they stood grasping each other's hand, their feelings being too full for further speech.

"Sit you down right here, Norris," one of the miners said, rising, "no doubt you will like a talk together, and we will leave you to yourselves."

The other miners rose, and with the real courtesy and kindness which lurked under the rough nature of the diggers, all left the spot. Captain Bayley was the first to speak.

"But here is some one else wants to shake your hand, Frank, an old friend too."

The fire was not burning very brightly, and although Frank seemed to know the young fellow who stood leaning lightly on two sticks, he could not recall where he had seen him before.

"Don't you remember me, Frank," he said, "the lad whom you took so much trouble with over his Homer?"

"Harry Holl," Frank said in astonishment.

"It was as Harry Holl that you knew him, but we have since found out that he is my grandson, the son of my daughter Ella," Captain Bayley explained.

"Then you are my cousin," Frank said, advancing and shaking Harry's hand; "but how on earth have you and uncle come out here?"

"Let us sit down by the fire, Frank, for the evening is chilly, and then I will tell you all about it. But first, how about that enormous brute of a dog, who doesn't seem to have made up his mind whether the proper thing is not to devour us at once."

"Come, Turk, good dog, these are friends of mine."

Finding that the intentions of the newcomers were amicable, of which at first he had entertained some doubts, Turk threw himself down by the side of his master.

"First of all, uncle," Frank said, as he sat down, "has that affair been cleared up?"

"Well, not exactly cleared up, Frank, but we have our suspicions. Harry and I never for a moment thought it was you—that is not till you ran away instead of facing it out. I don't want to scold you now, but that was a foolish business."

"Then if you thought me innocent, uncle, why did you not answer my letter? I should never have dreamed of running away if I had not been heartbroken at the thought that you believed me guilty."

"Letter!" Captain Bayley repeated in astonishment, "what letter? That was just the thing, if you had written me only one line to say you were innocent I should never have doubted you for a moment, and even your running away would have made no difference to me."

"But I did write, uncle; I wrote to you the very first thing, telling you that I was innocent, although apearances were all against me, and saying that I could bear anything if I knew that you believed in me, and I begged you to send me just one line by hand. I waited all day for the answer, and all the evening, and when night came and no letter I felt that you believed me guilty; I became des-

perate, and when Fred advised me to bolt, and offered me the money to take me away, I thought I might as well go at once as go after the disgrace of being publicly expelled before the whole school."

"But I never got the letter," Captain Bayley said, "never got a line from you, and it was that which shook my faith."

"I gave the letter to Fred Barkley to post, half an hour after I came down from school, that is before eleven o'clock, and he told me he posted it at once."

"I am afraid," Captain Bayley said sternly, "that Fred Barkley is a vile young scoundrel; we have had our suspicions of him, Harry and I, and this seems to confirm them. I believe that villain is at the bottom of the whole affair. Have you ever suspected him, Frank?"

"Such an idea has flitted across my mind, uncle, but I have never allowed it to rest there; it was too shocking to believe."

"I am afraid it must be believed," Captain Bayley said. "It was Harry who first pointed it out to me that, looking at the whole case, the matter really lay between him and you, and that it was just as probable that he took the note and sent it to you as that you should have taken it and sent it to yourself. Harry urged indeed that Fred had far greater motives for doing so than you; for whereas you had only to get out of a stupid scrape, he would be playing for the money which I was to leave, which was a heavy stake. On the other hand, he admitted that the crime of stealing the note for the purpose of ruining you would be infinitely greater than the taking of money in your case.

"I have nearly worried myself into a lunatic asylum over the matter. I have been away from England for upward of a year—partly for the sake of Harry here, who has got rid of his box long ago, and now gets along very fairly on sticks, partly to avoid seeing Fred, for as long as this thing

was unsettled, it was impossible that I could give him my hand.

"My heart has all along been with you, my boy, for you know I loved you as a son; but your silence and your running away were ugly weights in the scale against you. Now that I find that that villain suppressed your letter—for he must have done so, else I should have got it—and that it was he who urged you to fly to get you out of the way, I have no longer a shadow of doubt in my mind. I must tell you that Harry here never doubted you from the first; and as for Alice, she became a veritable little fury when the posssibility of your guilt was suggested. We have had some rare battles and rows over that and her absolute refusal to speak to Fred, who from the first she insisted was at the bottom of it, though how she arrived at that conclusion, except by instinct, is more than I can tell. Her joy when Harry here was found, and of course took the position I had intended for you, and her delight in Fred's discomfiture, were, as I told her several times, absolutely indecent. Not that she minded a farthing; she is the most insubordinate young person I ever came across. You will hardly know her again, Frank, she is growing fast into a young woman, and a very pretty one too."

"But how did you find me, uncle? Was it from Mr. Adams that you heard where I was?"

"Well, Frank, we advertised for you, for over two years, in the American and Colonial papers, and at last began almost to despair.

"About two months ago, when we were in Milan—for we have been wandering about Europe for the last eight or nine months—your friend Adams found us out; the good fellow had been hunting for us for two months."

"Ah! that explains why I have not heard from him," Frank interrupted. "I have been looking for a letter for the last two months, and had begun to conclude that as he

had nothing pleasant to tell me he had not written, and that I should never hear now."

"Then you thought like a young fool," Captain Bayley said angrily. "Well, as soon as Adams had given your message to Alice—and why you should have supposed that Alice should have believed in your innocence any more than me, except that women never will believe what they don't want to believe, I don't know—well, of course, she told us about it at once, and we came back to England and talked it over, and settled that the best thing was for us all to come out and see you."

"All!" Frank repeated in surprise.

"Yes, all; the headstrong young woman would not be left behind, and she is at Sacramento now, that is if she hasn't been shot by some of these red-shirted miners, or come to her end some other way. We stayed two days at San Francisco. I have wandered about a good deal, but I thought before I saw Sacramento and these places, that city was the residence of the roughest and most dangerous set of rascals I ever met.

"We traveled by coach across the plains, and on going to the bank at Sacramento found that you had been just shooting some highwaymen, and had got your arm broken by a bullet. So we put Alice in charge of the landlady of the hotel, and dared her to stir out of the room till we got back; we came on to the place where they said you were stopping, but found that you had come on here this morning. So we took our places in the coach again, and here we are; and the sooner we get away from here the better, so I hope you will be ready to start early in the morning."

"But, my dear uncle," Frank began.

"Don't give me any of your buts, sir," Captain Bayley said peremptorily. "You have been hiding too long, now you must go back and take your place again."

"But I can't clear myself of this affair."

"Don't tell me, sir," the old officer said angrily, "you have cleared yourself to me, and I will take good care that the truth is known. As for that rascal Fred, I deserve all the trouble that I have gone through for being such an old fool as to let him take me in. I want to get back as quickly as possible to make my will again. Ever since Harry put the idea into my mind I have been fretting about the one I had made leaving Fred a third of my property. I thought if anything happened to me before the matter was cleared up, and I found out in the next world—where I suppose people know everything—that I had been wrong, I should have been obliged to have asked for a furlough to come back again to set it straight. Alice will be fidgeting her life out, and we must set out at once; so let us have no more nonsense about delay."

Frank offered no further resistance, and agreed to start on the following morning.

"You look more like yourself now, Frank," his uncle said, "for, except by the tones of your voice, I should hardly have known you. You must have grown ten inches bigger round the shoulders than you were, and have grown into a very big man. You don't look so big here, where there are so many burly miners about, but when you get back to London people will quite stare at you. Your face at present is tanned almost black, and that beard, which I suppose is the result of exposure, makes you look half a dozen years older than you really are. I hope you will shave it off at once, and look like a civilized English gentleman."

"I suppose I must do so," Frank said, rather ruefully, "for one never sees a beard in London, except on a foreigner. I suppose some day men will be sensible and wear them."

They sat talking until late in the night, Frank hearing all particulars of the discovery of Harry's relationship to

Captain Bayley, and the news of all that had taken place since he had left England. He arranged for sleeping accommodation for them for the night in the hut of the storekeeper for whom he brought up provisions, judging that this was more comfortable and quiet for them than in the crowded and noisy plank edifice called the hotel. The next morning they started by the coach for Sacramento, Frank ordering the muleteers to follow with the animals at once. It was a twenty-four hours' drive; but it did not seem a long one to any of them, for Frank had so much to tell about his doings and adventures from the day when he last saw them, that there was scarce a pause in their talk, until at night Captain Bayley and Harry dozed in their corner of the coach, while Frank got outside and sat and smoked by the driver, being altogether too excited by the sudden arrival of his uncle, and the change in all his plans, to feel inclined for sleep. It was ten o'clock in the morning when they drove into Sacramento.

"I think, uncle, I will just go round to my house, for I keep one regularly here, and put on the garb of civilization. Alice would not recognize me in this red shirt and high boots."

"Stuff and nonsense!" Captain Bayley said. "You had a wash-up when we breakfasted, and what do you want more? There, go up and see the girl at once, Harry and I will join you in a minute or two; according to my experience, these sort of meetings are always better without the presence of a third party," and the old officer winked at his grandson as Frank sprang up the stairs after the waiter whom Captain Bayley directed to show him to Miss Hardy's sitting-room.

Although Captain Bayley had told him that Alice had become a young woman, Frank had not realized the change that three years had produced in her. He had left her a laughing girl—a dear little girl, Frank had always thought

—but scarcely pretty, and he stood for a moment in astonishment at the tall and very beautiful young woman of eighteen who stood before him. Alice was no less astonished, and for a moment could scarcely credit that this broad muscular man was her old playfellow, Frank. The pause was but momentary on both parties, and with a cry of joy and welcome the girl ran into his arms as frankly and naturally as she had done as a child.

"There, that's enough, Frank," she said presently. "You mustn't do that any more, you know, because I am grown up, and you know we are not really even cousins."

"Cousins or not, Alice," Frank said, laughing, "I have kissed you from the time you were a child, and if you suppose I am going to give it up now, when there is a real pleasure in kissing you, you are mistaken, I can tell you."

"We shall see about that, sir," the girl said; "we are in California now, among wild people, but when we get back to England we must behave like civilized beings. But, oh Frank, what a monster of a dog! Is he savage? He looks as if he were going to fly at me."

For Turk, to whom greetings of this sort were entirely new, was standing at the door, his bristles half-raised, doubtful whether Alice was to be treated as a friend or foe.

"Come here, Turk. He is the best of dogs, Alice, though it is well not to put him out, for he has killed two men, one in defense of our money, the other of myself; but he is the dearest of dogs, and I will tell you some day how I found him. Come here, Turk, and give your hand to this lady, she is a very great friend of your master."

Turk gravely approached and offered his paw, which Alice took cautiously, Frank's report of his doings being by no means encouraging. Turk, satisfied now that there was no occasion for his interference, threw himself down at full length upon the hearthrug, and Alice turned to Frank.

"I am so glad you are coming home again."

"And I am glad to be coming home again," Frank said, "or rather I shall be when this matter is quite cleared up."

"I should not bother any more about it," Alice said decidedly. "Uncle Harry and I are all quite, quite sure that you had nothing to do with that horrible business, and that ought to be quite enough for you."

"It isn't quite enough, Alice," he said, "although it is a very great deal; but we need not talk about that now. Oh, here is uncle."

In the course of the day Alice heard of the new light which had been thrown on the matter by the discovery that Frank had written to protest his innocence, which letter had never come to hand, and that it was Fred who had urged Frank to fly and had supplied him with money to do so.

"I always knew he was at the bottom of it," Alice said decidedly. "I always said it was Fred. But I hope, Frank, you or uncle don't mean to take any steps to get him into trouble. I hate him, you know, and always have; still, I think he will be punished enough with the loss of the money he so wickedly tried to gain."

"I think so too, Alice; he has behaved like a scoundrel of the worst kind, but, for my part, I am quite content to leave him alone. Still, we must if possible prove that I was innocent."

"But we all know you are innocent, Frank. Uncle never would have doubted it if it had not been for the stories Fred told."

"Yes, Alice; but all the fellows at Westminster were told I was guilty. I shall be constantly meeting them in the world, and all my life this blot will hang to me if it is not set straight. When we get home I shall go back to the school and see if I cannot hit on some clew or other. Of course if Fred would confess it would be all right, but,

after all, we have not a shadow of real proof against him. We have only our suspicion, and the fact that the letter did not come to hand; and if he faces it out, and declares he posted it all right, who is to gainsay him? Letters have gone wrong before now. I must clear myself if I can, but I promise you that I will not bring public disgrace upon him if it can possibly be avoided."

"He ought to be publicly disgraced," Captain Bayley roared, "the mean scoundrel, with his quiet voice and his treacherous lies. Not disgrace him? I would tie him up to a post in St. Paul's Churchyard, and hire a bellman to stand on a chair beside him and tell the story of what he has done every half-hour. Why, sir, he would have taken in St. Dunstan with his pretended hesitation to say anything to your disadvantage, and the affectation of pain with which he hinted that you had confessed your guilt to him. The scoundrel, the rascal, the hypocrite! When I think what his work has done, that you were disgraced at school, and sent wandering for three years—not that that has done you any harm, rather the contrary—to think that Alice has been wretched, and I have been on thorns and out of temper with myself and every one else for the same time, that for the last year we have been wandering about Europe like three sentimental travelers, wasting our lives, spending our money, and making fools of ourselves, I tell you, sir, if I was sitting as president of a court-martial on him, I would give him five hundred lashes, and then order him to be drummed out of the regiment."

Frank was about to speak, but Alice shook her head to him behind her uncle's back; she knew that his bark was much worse than his bite, and that, while contradiction would only render him obstinate, he would, if left alone, cool down long before the time for action arrived, and could then be coaxed into any course they might all agree upon.

The next morning the party started for San Francisco. Frank had already found a purchaser for his team of mules at a good price, had wound up all his affairs, and obtained an order from the bank on their agents in England for the amount standing to his credit, which came to seven thousand five hundred and sixty pounds.

His uncle was astounded when he heard how much Frank had earned in less than two years' work. "I shall look at these red-shirted ruffians with more respect in future, Frank; for, for aught I know, they may have tens of thousands standing to their credit at the bank."

"My luck has been exceptional, sir," Frank said. "I might dig for another fifty years without making so much. Of course, there are people who have made a good deal more in the same time, but then there are thousands who are no richer than when they began. We had done little more than keep ourselves when we went to work on Adams' claim. We had nearly four hundred apiece from him, besides what we made for our labor, for the horses pretty well kept us; then from the claim six hundred apiece. We had four thousand each out of the rich strike we made at the head of the gulch; the bank gave me two thousand more; the odd money represents the receipts of the rest of my digging and of my earnings with the mule team."

They started for Europe by the first steamer which left San Francisco for Panama, and reached home without adventure. The next morning Captain Bayley took Frank to Mr. Griffith, and told him the story as he had learned it from Frank.

"There, Griffith," he said triumphantly, when he had finished, "if you are not ready to admit that you are the most obstinate, pig-headed fellow that ever lived, I give you up altogether."

"I was wrong, I am glad to see," the lawyer said, smiling, "but I cannot admit that I was wrong as far as the

evidence that was before me went; but certainly with the light our young friend has thrown upon the matter I cannot doubt that the view you took was the correct one. Still, remember there is still no actual proof such as a court of justice would go upon. Morally we may be convinced, but unless you obtain further evidence I do not think you are in a position openly to charge Fred Barkley with stealing that ten-pound note, nor do I see how you are to set about getting such evidence."

"We are going to try, anyhow," Captain Bayley said. "Frank and I are going down to Westminster to-morrow to open the investigation again, and with what we know now it is hard if we don't manage to get something."

CHAPTER XXII.

CLEARED AT LAST.

THE FOLLOWING day, after lunch, Captain Bayley and Frank drove round to Westminster. Football was going on in Dean's yard, and Frank recognized among the players many faces that he knew. It seemed strange to him to think that while he had gone through so much, and had grown from a boy into a man, that they had changed so little, and had been working away regularly at the old round of Euripides and Homer, Terence and Virgil. The carriage stopped at the entrance to Dean's yard, and, alighting, they walked across to Mr. Richards'.

Captain Bayley had written a line to the master, asking him if possible to remain at home, as he wished particularly to see him, and he and Frank were ushered straight into the master's study. He shook hands with Captain Bayley, whose acquaintance he had made while Frank had boarded with him, and then looked at Frank; for a minute he did not recognize him, then he exclaimed in surprise, "Frank Norris!"

"Yes, it's I, sir," Frank said; "I don't ask you to take my hand, for you believe me guilty of the crime of which I was accused here. I can only say now, as I said then, that I am innocent. I know now that I was a fool to run away instead of facing it out, but I was desperate, because every one thought me guilty."

"Your schoolfellows did not, Norris," Mr. Richards said. "I don't think that I did, even at first; a few hours

afterward I almost knew you were innocent, and had you not run away I could have gone far to prove it."

Frank gave an exclamation of joy, and Captain Bayley exclaimed indignantly:

"Then why did you not prove it, sir? Why did you allow my nephew to remain with the foul disgrace on his name?"

"I did not act without consideration," Mr. Richards said calmly. "Norris had gone, and I resolved if he returned again to say what I had learned; but my proofs were not absolute. We had made, it seemed to me, a terrible mistake, and I did not wish to cause ruin to another boy unless it was absolutely necessary to do so to clear Norris. Now that he has returned I can no longer hesitate; but before I begin I must ask you both whether your suspicions have fallen on any one else?"

"It is not suspicion, sir, it is certainty," Captain Bayley said; "we have no doubt whatever that the whole thing was the work of Frank's rascally cousin, Fred Barkley. He was, you know, a sort of rival of Frank for my favor, and he had reason to believe that I had determined that Frank should inherit the larger portion of my property; thus he had a motive for bringing disgrace on him. It was just as probable that he should have stolen the money and sent it to Frank as that Frank should have stolen it himself; so far it seemed to me that it might lie between either of them.

"What has settled the case in my mind is that I have learned that Fred was intrusted with a letter by Frank to me, declaring his innocence, which, as you know, I never doubted until Frank left without writing to me. That letter I never received, and I believe that it was suppressed. In the second place it was Fred who persuaded his cousin to take that ruinous step of running away, and pressed upon him money to enable him to do so, although

he had refused to lend him a halfpenny when Frank required it to pay that broken-nosed tailor to hold his tongue."

"Very well," Mr. Richards said, "then I can speak freely; my silence was caused to some considerable extent by regard for your feelings. You had lost one nephew, who had gone away with a cloud of disgrace surrounding him—for aught I could tell, Norris, in his despair, might have committed suicide, or he might have so cut himself off from you that you might never have heard from him again—thus, then, I felt that it would be cruel indeed to prove that your other nephew was a villain, unless by so doing I could restore Norris to you. So, after much thought and deliberation, I determined to hold my tongue until I heard that Norris had either returned or had been heard of.

"On the morning when it was discovered that Frank had fled, I called up one by one the whole of the boys in the house. Even after his flight I could not believe that Norris had done this thing, it was so absolutely contrary to all that I knew of his disposition, and I determined to sift the matter to the bottom. From the elder boys I learned nothing, although I questioned them most closely as to everything that had taken place in the house during the past week. I was not disappointed, for I had hardly expected to learn much from them.

"It was from the four boys who were the fags of the four who had been in Frank's secret that I hoped to learn something, and I was not mistaken. From the three in the house I learned nothing; but when I came to Pearson, who was Barkley's junior and fag, I met with even more success than I had expected. At first, of course, the boy did not like to say anything; but I told him that unless he answered my questions freely I should have him up before Doctor Litter, and he then told me all he knew about it.

PROPERTY OF CANCELLED

"The more willingly, for, like most other boys in the school, he was fond of Norris, while Barkley was by no means a kind master. He said that twice Barkley had got into a rage with him about things which didn't seem of any importance. The first occasion was a week previous. He had gone into Barkley's study to ask him to explain some difficulty in his Cæsar; the door was not fastened, and as he had been working with his shoes off, Barkley did not hear him till he was close to the table. The boy noticed that he had a sheet of writing-paper before him, on which he was writing, not in his usual hand, but in printed characters. He would have thought nothing of it had not Barkley, on looking up and seeing him standing there, jumped up in a sudden rage and boxed his ears furiously, calling him a prying little sneak. The boy could not fix this to a day, but it was certainly just about the time when this letter was posted to you.

"The other affair had happened the day previously. He had gone into Barkley's room with his books on coming down from school at twelve o'clock, and seeing on his table a letter stamped and ready for the post, he supposed that as usual he was to post it, and was running downstairs with it in his hand when he met Barkley coming up. 'What have you got there?' he asked. 'I am taking your letter to the post,' he said; whereupon Barkley flew into another rage, called him an officious little beast, gave him a box in the ear, and took the letter from him. I asked the boy if he noticed to whom the letter was directed. He said he had, and that it was to you. Knowing nothing about the suppression of a letter of Norris', and thinking that perhaps Barkley had written to his uncle about the matter, and had then changed his mind about posting it, this second affair did not strike me as having any importance whatever. The first matter, however, seemed important, for that just at the time when a letter was sent to

Norris written in printing characters Barkley should have been seen writing a letter of that sort, struck me as most remarkable; and although I did not know exactly how the two lads stood in reference to yourself, it struck me at once that it was at least possible that we had been wrong, and that it was Barkley after all who took the note.

"Had I suspected for an instant that he had done it to bring disgrace upon his cousin, I should at once have communicated with Dr. Litter, and have probed the affair from the bottom; but I thought that he had taken the note with the intention of helping his cousin out of his difficulty, and that when the note was traced, and the matter became public, he had in a base and cowardly manner allowed Frank to bear the blame. This would have been bad enough in all conscience, although comparatively venial to his deliberate attempt to bring disgrace upon Norris.

"However, the matter seemed bad enough to me as it stood; but, as I said, I shrunk from causing the ruin of another young fellow unless it was necessary to clear Norris. I hesitated for a long time whether, knowing as much as I did, I ought not to take some steps in the matter; but for the reasons I have told you I determined to wait, hoping that you would soon have Norris back again, and knowing that I should hear of his return from some of the boys who were his special friends. Barkley must have seen from my manner that there was something wrong between him and me; but he never asked me the reason for the change in my manner to him, and completely ignored my coolness. It was a relief to me when the time came for his going up to the university, for I then felt that some of the responsibility was off my shoulders, and that I was no longer shirking my duty to expose him.

"That is all, Captain Bayley; but I think that this, with what you have told me, is quite sufficient to bring the guilt home to the true party, and to completely clear Norris."

"Quite sufficient," Captain Bayley said, "and I am thankful indeed that you obtained the one missing link of evidence necessary to prove Frank's innocence. I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. Richards, for the kind and thoughtful manner in which you acted, which was indeed in every way for the best; for had I at the time been made aware that Fred was the culprit, I should have gone half out of my mind at the injustice we had done Frank, and at not knowing where to find him or how to communicate with him. And now what is to be done next? I do not want this unhappy lad to be punished, but at the same time it is absolutely necessary that Frank's innocence shall be publicly proclaimed. Fred will no doubt brazen it out."

There was silence for a minute or two, and then Mr. Richards said:

"If you like, Captain Bayley, I will take the matter in hand. I will write to Barkley and tell him that Norris has now come home, and that I must therefore take up the matter at the point at which I dropped it. I will recapitulate to him the reasons that there are for supposing that he stole the money—first, his interest in Frank's disgrace; secondly, the fact that he was seen writing a letter in printed characters on the day on which the note was sent to Norris; thirdly, his suppression of the letter to yourself; fourthly, the part he took in persuading Norris to run away; lastly, the hints which you say he gave you that Norris had confessed his guilt.

"I shall tell him I have had this interview with you; that you are thoroughly convinced of his guilt and of Norris' innocence; and that while you are determined that Norris shall be vindicated, you are desirous that his act of treacherous villainy shall not be made public; if, then, he will write a confession, saying that he took it, this confession shall not be made public.

"I shall of course show it to the doctor, and explain the

whole circumstances to him, and ask him to make a public statement in school to the boys, to the effect that it has been found out that Norris was not guilty of the act of which two years ago he was charged,and that the real thief has been discovered, but that as he is no longer at school it is unnecessary now to mention his name, and that, moreover, he has been heavily punished for the crime—which indeed is the case—by his loss of your favor and of the fortune which he looked to obtain under your will.

"I shall tell Barkley that if he refuses to confess it will be necessary, in order to clear Norris, that the affair should be investigated in a public court, and that Dr. Litter will at once apply for a warrant for his apprehension on the charge of theft, and that the whole matter will then be gone into in a police court. I cannot doubt but that he will accept the first alternative, for the second will be ruin to him."

Captain Bayley cordially assented. Three days later Frank received a letter from Dr. Litter asking him to call upon him.

"I am truly sorry, Norris," the head-master said, as he entered, "for the injustice I did you; truly and heartily sorry. The affair caused me intense pain at the time; it has been on my mind ever since. Over and over again something has told me that you were innocent; and yet, thinking the case over again, my reason has always convinced me for the time of your guilt, for I could see no other possible solution of the mystery. I am glad indeed to find that I was mistaken, and that you were a victim of a piece of what I can only term villainy. The affair will be a lesson to me for my life, and henceforth I will never allow appearances, however apparently conclusive, to weigh against a uniformly excellent character. I trust that you will forgive my terrible error."

"I don't see that you could have acted otherwise, sir,"

Frank said, "for even at the time, although I knew that I was innocent, I perceived that the proofs against me were so overwhelmingly strong that my guilt must appear a certainty to every one. I am happy indeed that I am cleared at last; and, after all, it has done me no harm. I have, of course, lost the university education which I looked forward to; but I think, after all, that the three years I have spent in America have in many ways done me more good than the university could have done."

"Very likely, Norris," the doctor said; "they have in every sense of the word made a man of you, and a very fine man too, and I sincerely trust that no further cloud will ever fall upon your career. And now I want you to come to school with me, for I must publicly make amends for my error, and set you right before the school."

As Frank followed Dr. Litter into the great schoolroom he felt infinitely more nervous than he had done in any of the dangers he had passed through in his journey across the plains. When the head-master was seen to enter the school accompanied by a gentleman, a silence of surprise fell upon the boys, for such an event was altogether unprecedented there. As in the stranger, who stood nearly as tall and far broader than the doctor, many of the boys in the upper forms recognized Frank Norris, a buzz ran round the school, followed again by the silence of excited expectation. Dr. Litter walked to his table at the further end of the school and then turned.

"You will all stand up," he said. "Boys," he went on, "all of you in the fifth form, and those above it, and some of you in the under forms, will recognize in the gentleman who stands beside me your former schoolfellow Norris; those who do will be aware of the circumstances under which he left, and will be aware that I charged him with stealing a note of the value of ten pounds from my desk. I am happy to say that it has been proved that charge was entirely false."

A sudden burst of enthusiastic cheering broke from the upper forms. Norris' innocence had been a matter of faith among his schoolfellows, and even his running away had not sufficed to shake their trust in him. They stood upon the forms and cheered until they were hoarse. At last a wave of the doctor's hand restored silence, and he went on.

"I wish now, before you all, boys, to express my deep regret to Norris, and to apologize to him most heartily for the accusation which I made. I have now in my hand the confession of the real culprit. I shall not mention his name; he has long since ceased to be among you, and I may say that he has been punished severely, though to my mind most insufficiently, for his crime, and as Norris is desirous that the matter shall be dropped, the least I can do is to give in to his wishes. And now, as I think that after this you will scarcely do any useful work this afternoon, you may as well go down at once."

A fresh roar of cheering broke out, and then the boys who had been at school with Frank jumped from their forms and crowded round him, each striving to grasp his hand, and all shouting words of welcome and congratulation.

It was some time before Frank could reply to these greetings, so shaken was he by the scene. On emerging from the schoolroom his old house-mates urged him to go up to Richards', and the sixth were invited to accompany him. Although contrary to the usual rules, an unlimited supply of shandy-gaff was sent for, and for an hour Frank sat and chatted with his old schoolfellows, and to their great admiration gave them an outline of his adventures on the Mississippi, his journey across the plains, and as a gold-digger in California; then with a glad heart, and a feeling that he was at last cleared of the cloud which had so long hung over him, Frank returned to Eaton Square.

His path in life never afterward crossed that of his cousin. The latter, after passing through the university with credit, entered the bar. Somehow he was not successful there. That he was clever all allowed, but a cloud seemed to hang over him. The tale of Frank's reinstallation had gone up from Westminster to the university; his old schoolfellows there had talked the matter over, and although nothing was known for certain, somehow the belief that Barkley was the culprit spread among them.

He had never been popular, and now his old schoolfellows gradually drew aloof from him. Nothing was ever openly said. The thing was talked of in whispers, but even whispers, sometimes, are heard; and during his last year at the university Fred Barkley stood alone among his fellows. The whispers found their echo in town and Fred Barkley found that a cloud rested on him which all his efforts were unable to dissipate. After some years of useless attempts to make his way, he was glad to accept the offer of a petty judgeship in India, and there, ten years later, he died, stabbed to the heart by a Mohammedan dacoit whom he had sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

A year after his return from America Frank married Alice. Turk, for some time after his arrival in England, had steadily declined all advances which she made to him, perceiving clearly in his heart that she was a rival in his master's affection. He had at last, however, the good sense to accept the situation; but to the end of his life, which was a long one, he never accorded her more than toleration, keeping all the affection of his great heart for his master, although in his old years he took to his master's children, and endured patiently, if not cordially, the affection which they bestowed upon him.

Frank sits in parliament at present, as member for the county in which the broad estates which came to him with his wife are situated. It was rather a disappointment to

her that he did not distinguish himself greatly in parliament, but he was fonder of the country life of an English gentleman than of the squabbles at Westminster. He can always be depended upon to vote with his party, and he occasionally makes vigorous and indignant attacks against any policy which he believes to be lowering the *prestige* and position of his country; but, except upon occasions when subjects of national interest are being discussed, he is seldom to be found in the House, and his wife is now well content with his reputation as one of the best masters of fox-hounds, one of the best landlords, and one of the most popular country gentlemen in England.

Captain Bayley died but ten years ago, at a great age, and his grandson, long since able to dispense with his crutches, is one of the most prominent members in the house of commons. He could, had he chosen, have long since had a place in the ministry, but he declined, as it would have taken too much of his time from the favorite subject which occupies the chief part of his thoughts and life, namely the effort to ameliorate the condition of the poorer classes in the great towns.

Evan Holl is a distinguished engineer. The business of John Holl, Dust Contractor, is still carried on under that name by the children of John and Sarah, who died within a few days of each other, some twenty years since, full of happiness and contentment.

THE END.

A. L. BURT'S PUBLICATIONS

For Young People

BY POPULAR WRITERS,

97-99-101 Reade Street, New York.

Bonnie Prince Charlie: A Tale of Fontenoy and Culloden. By G. A. HENTY. With 12 full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The adventures of the son of a Scotch officer in French service. The boy, brought up by a Glasgow bailie, is a rested for aiding a Jacobite agent, escapes, is wrecked on the French coast, reaches Paris, and serves with the French army at Dettingen. He kills his father's foe in a duel, and escaping to the coast, shares the adventures of Prince Charlie, but finally settles happily in Scotland.

"Ronald, the hero, is very like the hero of 'Quentin Durward.' The lad's journey across France, and his hairbreadth escapes, make up as good a narrative of the kind as we have ever read. For freshness of treatment and variety of incident Mr. Henty has surpassed himself."—*Spectator.*

With Clive in India; or, the Beginnings of an Empire. By G. A. HENTY. With 12 full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The period between the landing of Clive as a young writer in India and the close of his career was critical and eventful in the extreme. At its commencement the English were traders existing on sufferance of the native princes. At its close they were masters of Bengal and of the greater part of Southern India. The author has given a full and accurate account of the events of that stirring time, and battles and sieges follow each other in rapid succession, while he combines with his narrative a tale of daring and adventure, which gives a lifelike interest to the volume.

"He has taken a period of Indian history of the most vital importance, and he has embroidered on the historical facts a story which of itself is deeply interesting. Young people assuredly will be delighted with the volume."—*Scotsman.*

The Lion of the North: A Tale of Gustavus Adolphus and the Wars of Religion. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by JOHN SCHÖNBERG. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story Mr. Henty gives the history of the first part of the Thirty Years' War. The issue had its importance, which has extended to the present day, as it established religious freedom in Germany. The army of the chivalrous king of Sweden was largely composed of Scotchmen, and among these was the hero of the story.

"The tale is a clever and instructive piece of history, and as boys may be trusted to read it conscientiously, they can hardly fail to be profited."—*Times.*

The Dragon and the Raven; or, The Days of King Alfred. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by C. J. STANILAND, R.I. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story the author gives an account of the fierce struggle between Saxon and Dane for supremacy in England, and presents a vivid picture of the misery and ruin to which the country was reduced by the ravages of the sea-wolves. The hero, a young Saxon thane, takes part in all the battles fought by King Alfred. He is driven from his home, takes to the sea and resists the Danes on their own element, and being pursued by them up the Seine, is present at the long and desperate siege of Paris.

"Treated in a manner most attractive to the boyish reader."—*Athenæum*

The Young Carthaginian: A Story of the Times of Hannibal. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by C. J. STANILAND, R.I. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Boys reading the history of the Punic Wars have seldom a keen appreciation of the merits of the contest. That it was at first a struggle for empire, and afterward for existence on the part of Carthage, that Hannibal was a great and skillful general, that he defeated the Romans at Trebia, Lake Trasimenus, and Cannæ, and all but took Rome, represents pretty nearly the sum total of their knowledge. To let them know more about this momentous struggle for the empire of the world Mr. Henty has written this story, which not only gives in graphic style a brilliant description of a most interesting period of history, but is a tale of exciting adventure sure to secure the interest of the reader.

"Well constructed and vividly told. From first to last nothing stays the interest of the narrative. It bears us along as on a stream whose current varies in direction, but never loses its force."—*Saturday Review.*

In Freedom's Cause: A Story of Wallace and Bruce. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story the author relates the stirring tale of the Scottish War of Independence. The extraordinary valor and personal prowess of Wallace and Bruce rival the deeds of the mythical heroes of chivalry, and indeed at one time Wallace was ranked with these legendary personages. The researches of modern historians have shown, however, that he was a living, breathing man—and a valiant champion. The hero of the tale fought under both Wallace and Bruce, and while the strictest historical accuracy has been maintained with respect to public events, the work is full of "hairbreadth 'scapes" and wild adventure.

"It is written in the author's best style. Full of the wildest and most remarkable achievements, it is a tale of great interest, which a boy, once he has begun it, will not willingly put on one side."—*The Schoolmaster.*

With Lee in Virginia: A Story of the American Civil War. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The story of a young Virginian planter, who, after bravely proving his sympathy with the slaves of brutal masters, serves with no less courage and enthusiasm under Lee and Jackson through the most exciting events of the struggle. He has many hairbreadth escapes, is several times wounded and twice taken prisoner; but his courage and readiness and, in two cases, the devotion of a black servant and of a runaway slave whom he had assisted, bring him safely through all difficulties.

"One of the best stories for lads which Mr. Henty has yet written. The picture is full of life and color, and the stirring and romantic incidents are skillfully blended with the personal interest and charm of the story."—*Standard.*

By England's Aid; or, The Freeing of the Netherlands (1585-1604). By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by ALFRED PEARSE, and Maps. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The story of two English lads who go to Holland as pages in the service of one of "the fighting Veres." After many adventures by sea and land, one of the lads finds himself on board a Spanish ship at the time of the defeat of the Armada, and escapes only to fall into the hands of the Corsairs. He is successful in getting back to Spain under the protection of a wealthy merchant, and regains his native country after the capture of Cadiz.

"It is an admirable book for youngsters. It overflows with stirring incident and exciting adventure, and the color of the era and of the scene are finely reproduced. The illustrations add to its attractiveness."—*Boston Gazette.*

By Right of Conquest; or, With Cortez in Mexico. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by W. S. STACEY, and Two Maps. 12mo, cloth, price $1.50.

The conquest of Mexico by a small band of resolute men under the magnificent leadership of Cortez is always rightly ranked among the most romantic and daring exploits in history. With this as the groundwork of his story Mr. Henty has interwoven the adventures of an English youth, Roger Hawkshaw, the sole survivor of the good ship Swan, which had sailed from a Devon port to challenge the mercantile supremacy of the Spaniards in the New World. He is beset by many perils among the natives, but is saved by his own judgment and strength, and by the devotion of an Aztec princess. At last by a ruse he obtains the protection of the Spaniards, and after the fall of Mexico he succeeds in regaining his native shore, with a fortune and a charming Aztec bride.

"'By Right of Conquest' is the nearest approach to a perfectly successful historical tale that Mr. Henty has yet published."—*Academy.*

In the Reign of Terror: The Adventures of a Westminster Boy. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by J. SCHÖNBERG. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Harry Sandwith, a Westminster boy, becomes a resident at the chateau of a French marquis, and after various adventures accompanies the family to Paris at the crisis of the Revolution. Imprisonment and death reduce their number, and the hero finds himself beset by perils with the three young daughters of the house in his charge. After hairbreadth escapes they reach Nantes. There the girls are condemned to death in the coffin-ships, but are saved by the unfailing courage of their boy protector.

"Harry Sandwith, the Westminster boy, may fairly be said to beat Mr. Henty's record. His adventures will delight boys by the audacity and peril they depict. . . The story is one of Mr. Henty's best."—*Saturday Review.*

With Wolfe in Canada; or, The Winning of a Continent. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In the present volume Mr. Henty gives an account of the struggle between Britain and France for supremacy in the North American continent. On the issue of this war depended not only the destinies of North America, but to a large extent those of the mother countries themselves. The fall of Quebec decided that the Anglo-Saxon race should predominate in the New World; that Britain, and not France, should take the lead among the nations of Europe; and that English and American commerce, the English language, and English literature, should spread right round the globe.

"It is not only a lesson in history as instructively as it is graphically told, but also a deeply interesting and often thrilling tale of adventure and peril by flood and field."—*Illustrated London News.*

True to the Old Flag: A Tale of the American War of Independence. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story the author has gone to the accounts of officers who took part in the conflict, and lads will find that in no war in which American and British soldiers have been engaged did they behave with greater courage and good conduct. The historical portion of the book being accompanied with numerous thrilling adventures with the redskins on the shores of Lake Huron, a story of exciting interest is interwoven with the general narrative and carried through the book.

"Does justice to the pluck and determination of the British soldiers during the unfortunate struggle against American emancipation. The son of an American loyalist, who remains true to our flag, falls among the hostile redskins in that very Huron country which has been endeared to us by the exploits of Hawkeye and Chingachgook."—*The Times.*

The Lion of St. Mark: A Tale of Venice in the Fourteenth Century. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A story of Venice at a period when her strength and splendor were put to the severest tests. The hero displays a fine sense and manliness which carry him safely through an atmosphere of intrigue, crime, and bloodshed. He contributes largely to the victories of the Venetians at Porto d'Anzo and Chioggia, and finally wins the hand of the daughter of one of the chief men of Venice.

"Every boy should read 'The Lion of St. Mark.' Mr. Henty has never produced a story more delightful, more wholesome, or more vivacious."—*Saturday Review.*

A Final Reckoning: A Tale of Bush Life in Australia. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by W. B. WOLLEN. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00,

The hero, a young English lad. after rather a stormy boyhood, emigrates to Australia, and gets employment as an officer in the mounted police. A few years of active work on the frontier, where he has many a brush with both natives and bushrangers, gain him promotion to a captaincy, and he eventually settles down to the peaceful life of a squatter.

"Mr. Henty has never published a more readable, a more carefully constructed, or a better written story than this."—*Spectator.*

Under Drake's Flag: A Tale of the Spanish Main. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A story of the days when England and Spain struggled for the supremacy of the sea. The heroes sail as lads with Drake in the Pacific expedition, and in his great voyage of circumnavigation. The historical portion of the story is absolutely to be relied upon, but this will perhaps be less attractive than the great variety of exciting adventure through which the young heroes pass in the course of their voyages.

"A book of adventure, where the hero meets with experience enough, one would think, to turn his hair gray."—*Harper's Monthly Magazine.*

By Sheer Pluck: A Tale of the Ashanti War. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The author has woven, in a tale of thrilling interest, all the details of the Ashanti campaign, of which he was himself a witness. His hero, after many exciting adventures in the interior, is detained a prisoner by the king just before the outbreak of the war, but escapes, and accompanies the English expedition on their march to Coomassie.

"Mr. Henty keeps up his reputation as a writer of boys' stories. 'By Sheer Pluck' will be eagerly read."—*Athenæum.*

By Pike and Dyke: A Tale of the Rise of the Dutch Republic. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by MAYNARD BROWN, and 4 Maps. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

In this story Mr. Henty traces the adventures and brave deeds of an English boy in the household of the ablest man of his age—William the Silent. Edward Martin, the son of an English sea-captain, enters the service of the Prince as a volunteer, and is employed by him in many dangerous and responsible missions, in the discharge of which he passes through the great sieges of the time. He ultimately settles down as Sir Edward Martin.

"Boys with a turn for historical research will be enchanted with the book, while the rest who only care for adventure will be students in spite of themselves."—*St. James' Gazette.*

St. George for England: A Tale of Cressy and Poitiers. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

No portion of English history is more crowded with great events than that of the reign of Edward III. Cressy and Poitiers; the destruction of the Spanish fleet; the plague of the Black Death; the Jacquerie rising; these are treated by the author in "St. George for England." The hero of the story, although of good family, begins life as a London apprentice, but after countless adventures and perils becomes by valor and good conduct the squire, and at last the trusted friend of the Black Prince.

"Mr. Henty has developed for himself a type of historical novel for boys which bids fair to supplement, on their behalf, the historical labors of Sir Walter Scott in the land of fiction."—*The Standard.*

Captain's Kidd's Gold: The True Story of an Adventurous Sailor Boy. By JAMES FRANKLIN FITTS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

There is something fascinating to the average youth in the very idea of buried treasure. A vision arises before his eyes of swarthy Portuguese and Spanish rascals, with black beards and gleaming eyes—sinister-looking fellows who once on a time haunted the Spanish Main, sneaking out from some hidden creek in their long, low schooner, of picaroonish rake and sheer, to attack an unsuspecting trading craft. There were many famous sea rovers in their day, but none more celebrated than Capt. Kidd. Perhaps the most fascinating tale of all is Mr. Fitts' true story of an adventurous American boy, who receives from his dying father an ancient bit of vellum, which the latter obtained in a curious way. The document bears obscure directions purporting to locate a certain island in the Bahama group, and a considerable treasure buried there by two of Kidd's crew. The hero of this book, Paul Jones Garry, is an ambitious, persevering lad, of salt-water New England ancestry, and his efforts to reach the island and secure the money form one of the most absorbing tales for our youth that has come from the press.

Captain Bayley's Heir: A Tale of the Gold Fields of California. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by H. M. PAGET. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A frank, manly lad and his cousin are rivals in the heirship of a co siderable property. The former falls into a trap laid by the latter, and while under a false accusation of theft foolishly leaves England for America. He works his passage before the mast, joins a small band of hunters, crosses a tract of country infested with Indians to the Californian gold diggings, and is successful both as digger and trader.

"Mr. Henty is careful to mingle instruction with entertainment; and the humorous touches, especially in the sketch of John Holl, the Westminster dustman, Dickens himself could hardly have excelled."—*Christian Leader.*

For Name and Fame; or, Through Afghan Passes. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

An interesting story of the last war in Afghanistan. The hero, after being wrecked and going through many stirring adventures among the Malays, finds his way to Calcutta and enlists in a regiment proceeding to join the army at the Afghan passes. He accompanies the force under General Roberts to the Peiwar Kotal, is wounded, taken prisoner, carried to Cabul, whence he is transferred to Candahar, and takes part in the final defeat of the army of Ayoub Khan.

"The best feature of the book—apart from the interest of its scenes of adventure—is its honest effort to do justice to the patriotism of the Afghan people."—*Daily News.*

Captured by Apes: The Wonderful Adventures of a Young Animal Trainer. By HARRY PRENTICE. 12mo, cloth, $1.00.

The scene of this tale is laid on an island in the Malay Archipelago. Philip Garland, a young animal collector and trainer, of New York, sets sail for Eastern seas in quest of a new stock of living curiosities. The vessel is wrecked off the coast of Borneo and young Garland, the sole survivor of the disaster, is cast ashore on a small island, and captured by the apes that overrun the place. The lad discovers that the ruling spirit of the monkey tribe is a gigantic and vicious baboon, whom he identifies as Goliah, an animal at one time in his possession and with whose instruction he had been especially diligent. The brute recognizes him, and with a kind of malignant satisfaction puts his former master through the same course of training he had himself experienced with a faithfulness of detail which shows how astonishing is monkey recollection. Very novel indeed is the way by which the young man escapes death. Mr. Prentice has certainly worked a new vein on juvenile fiction, and the ability with which he handles a difficult subject stamps him as a writer of undoubted skill.

The Bravest of the Brave; or, With Peterborough in Spain. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by H. M. PAGET. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

There are few great leaders whose lives and actions have so completely fallen into oblivion as those of the Earl of Peterborough. This is largely due to the fact that they were overshadowed by the glory and successes of Marlborough. His career as general extended over little more than a year, and yet, in that time, he showed a genius for warfare which has never been surpassed.

"Mr. Henty never loses sight of the moral purpose of his work—to enforce the doctrine of courage and truth. Lads will read 'The Bravest of the Brave' with pleasure and profit; of that we are quite sure."—*Daily Telegraph.*

The Cat of Bubastes: A Story of Ancient Egypt. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A story which will give young readers an unsurpassed insight into the customs of the Egyptian people. Amuba, a prince of the Rebu nation, is carried with his charioteer Jethro into slavery. They become inmates of the house of Ameres, the Egyptian high-priest, and are happy in his service until the priest's son accidentally kills the sacred cat of Bubastes. In an outburst of popular fury Ameres is killed, and it rests with Jethro and Amuba to secure the escape of the high-priest's son and daughter.

"The story, from the critical moment of the killing of the sacred cat to the perilous exodus into Asia with which it closes, is very skillfully constructed and full of exciting adventures. It is admirably illustrated."—*Saturday Review.*

With Washington at Monmouth: A Story of Three Philadelphia Boys. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Three Philadelphia boys, Seth Graydon "whose mother conducted a boarding-house which was patronized by the British officers;" Enoch Ball, "son of that Mrs. Ball whose dancing school was situated on Letitia Street," and little Jacob, son of "Chris, the Baker," serve as the principal characters. The story is laid during the winter when Lord Howe held possession of the city, and the lads aid the cause by assisting the American spies who make regular and frequent visits from Valley Forge. One reads here of home-life in the captive city when bread was scarce among the people of the lower classes, and a reckless prodigality shown by the British officers, who passed the winter in feasting and merry-making while the members of the patriot army but a few miles away were suffering from both cold and hunger. The story abounds with pictures of Colonial life skillfully drawn, and the glimpses of Washington's soldiers which are given show that the work has not been hastily done, or without considerable study.

For the Temple: A Tale of the Fall of Jerusalem. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by S. J. SOLOMON. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Mr. Henty here weaves into the record of Josephus an admirable and attractive story. The troubles in the district of Tiberias, the march of the legions, the sieges of Jotapata, of Gamala, and of Jerusalem, form the impressive and carefully studied historic setting to the figure of the lad who passes from the vineyard to the service of Josephus, becomes the leader of a guerrilla band of patriots, fights bravely for the Temple, and after a brief term of slavery at Alexandria, returns to his Galilean home with the favor of Titus.

"Mr. Henty's graphic prose pictures of the hopeless Jewish resistance to Roman sway add another leaf to his record of the famous wars of the world" —*Graphic.*

Facing Death; or, The Hero of the Vaughan Pit. A Tale of the Coal Mines. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"Facing Death" is a story with a purpose. It is intended to show that a lad who makes up his mind firmly and resolutely that he will rise in life, and who is prepared to face toil and ridicule and hardship to carry out his determination, is sure to succeed. The hero of the story is a typical British boy, dogged, earnest, generous, and though "shamefaced" to a degree, is ready to face death in the discharge of duty.

"The tale is well written and well illustrated, and there is much reality in the characters. If any father, clergyman, or schoolmaster is on the lookout for a good book to give as a present to a boy who is worth his salt, this is the book we would recommend."—*Standard.*

Tom Temple's Career. By HORATIO ALGER. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Tom Temple, a bright, self-reliant lad, by the death of his father becomes a boarder at the home of Nathan Middleton, a penurious insurance agent. Though well paid for keeping the boy, Nathan and his wife endeavor to bring Master Tom in line with their parsimonious habits. The lad ingeniously evades their efforts and revolutionizes the household. As Tom is heir to $40,000, he is regarded as a person of some importance until by an unfortunate combination of circumstances his fortune shrinks to a few hundreds. He leaves Plympton village to seek work in New York, whence he undertakes an important mission to California, around which center the most exciting incidents of his young career. Some of his adventures in the far west are so startling that the reader will scarcely close the book until the last page shall have been reached. The tale is written in Mr. Alger's most fascinating style, and is bound to please the very large class of boys who regard this popular author as a prime favorite.

Maori and Settler: A Story of the New Zealand War. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by ALFRED PEARSE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The Renshaws emigrate to New Zealand during the period of the war with the natives. Wilfrid, a strong, self-reliant, courageous lad, is the mainstay of the household. He has for his friend Mr. Atherton, a botanist and naturalist of herculean strength and unfailing nerve and humor. In the adventures among the Maoris, there are many breathless moments in which the odds seem hopelessly against the party, but they succeed in establishing themselves happily in one of the pleasant New Zealand valleys.

"Brimful of adventure, of humorous and interesting conversation, and vivid pictures of colonial life."—*Schoolmaster.*

Julian Mortimer: A Brave Boy's Struggle for Home and Fortune. By HARRY CASTLEMON. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Here is a story that will warm every boy's heart. There is mystery enough to keep any lad's imagination wound up to the highest pitch. The scene of the story lies west of the Mississippi River, in the days when emigrants made their perilous way across the great plains to the land of gold. One of the startling features of the book is the attack upon the wagon train by a large party of Indians. Our hero is a lad of uncommon nerve and pluck, a brave young American in every sense of the word. He enlists and holds the reader's sympathy from the outset. Surrounded by an unknown and constant peril, and assisted by the unswerving fidelity of a stalwart trapper, a real rough diamond, our hero achieves the most happy results. Harry Castlemon has written many entertaining stories for boys, and it would seem almost superfluous to say anything in his praise, for the youth of America regard him as a favorite author.

"Carrots:" Just a Little Boy. By MRS. MOLESWORTH. With Illustrations by WALTER CRANE. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

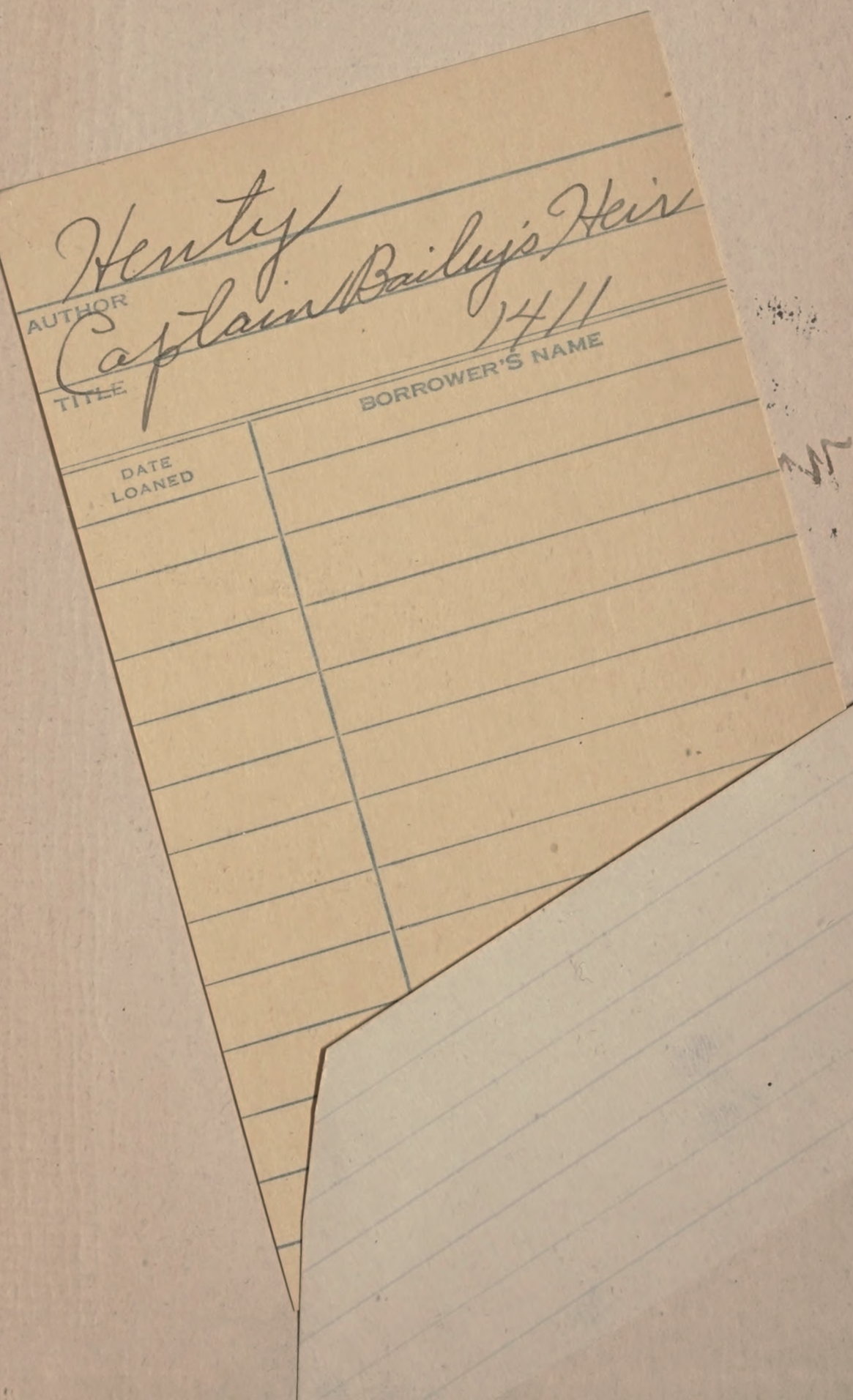
"One of the cleverest and most pleasing stories it has been our good fortune to meet with for some time. Carrots and his sister are delightful little beings, whom to read about is at once to become very fond of."—*Examiner.*

"A genuine children's book; we've seen 'em seize it, and read it greedily. Children are first-rate critics, and thoroughly appreciate Walter Crane's illustrations."—*Punch.*

Mopsa the Fairy. By JEAN INGELOW. With Eight page Illustrations. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"Mrs. Ingelow is, to our mind, the most charming of all living writers for children, and 'Mopsa' alone ought to give her a kind of pre-emptive right to the love and gratitude of our young folks. It requires genius to conceive a purely imaginary work which must of necessity deal with the supernatural, without running into a mere riot of fantastic absurdity; but genius Miss Ingelow has and the story of 'Jack' is as careless and joyous, but as delicate, as a picture of childhood."—*Eclectic.*

AUG 8
AUG 8
SEP 2 4
MAY 1 7
APR 6
MAY 1 3
Nov 27
FEB 18


Henty
AUTHOR
Captain Bailey's Heir
TITLE
1411
BORROWER'S NAME
DATE LOANED

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

0002472220A